

The Pearl of Pearls:
The Abdālī-Durrānī Confederacy and
Its Transformation under Aḥmad Shāh, Durr-i Durrān

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations
University of Toronto

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Abstract

This dissertation traces the history of the Abdālī-Durrānī tribal confederacy from its putative origins to the career of arguably its most influential historical personality, Aḥmad Shāh Durr-i Durrān, the “Pearl of Pearls” (r. 1747–72). Drawing upon extensive research of primary sources on the topic such as tribal genealogies, court chronicles, local histories, and other documents, this study examines the process whereby the Abdālī-Durrānī evolved from a petty Afghan tribal confederacy active in Qandahar, a frontier region of the early modern empires of the Safavids and Mughals, to founders of the autonomous Durrānī empire that, at its height under Aḥmad Shāh, was one of the most powerful polities in Asia.

Despite the considerable influence of the Abdālī-Durrānī, the crucial transitional period of the confederacy's history, spanning roughly from 1550 to 1818, remains understudied. "The Pearl of Pearls" is aimed at better understanding this history by exploring neglected topics such as: the construction of the Afghan identity of the Abdālī-Durrānī; the nature of the confederacy's interactions with the Safavid, Mughal, and Nādirid states; the gradual formation of the Durrānī state; the large-scale sedentarization of the Durrānī in the reign of Aḥmad Shāh and his successors; and the accompanying Persian acculturation of the tribal confederacy's ruling elite. While directed primarily towards supplementing our limited knowledge of the Abdālī-Durrānī and the early modern Durrānī state, this dissertation also considers the enduring legacies of Aḥmad Shāh's rule in relation to the modern history of Afghanistan.

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The individuals who contributed to this dissertation are many, though for practicality's sake I have limited myself to acknowledging those whose role was most immediate. First and foremost, I wish to express sincere gratitude to my supervisor, Prof. Maria Subtelny, who has been a constant source of inspiration and guidance since I began graduate studies at the University of Toronto. A scholar in the finest sense of the word, I have benefitted immensely from Prof. Subtelny's meticulous scholarship and extensive knowledge of Persian literature and historiography. Her erudition and counsel helped refine my understanding of the early modern history of Iran and Central Asia in various respects. Her patience and attention to detail vis-à-vis my writing also helped me identify and correct numerous glaring errors and formulate my core arguments in a more lucid manner. I only hope that the sentences above adequately reflect my profound appreciation of her contributions to this undertaking.

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Much of the research carried out for this dissertation was made possible by the staff at Robarts Library, especially its Interlibrary Loans office, and the British Library (at a distance in the latter case), who assisted in procuring several of the works studied for this project. Writing and research for this dissertation was also facilitated by various sources of funding, including the Ontario Government Scholarships awarded between 2013 and 2015; I would like also to thank the School of Graduate Studies and Department of Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations for their financial support at different stages of my doctoral studies.

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Aḥmad Shāh Durr-i Durrān, enthroned, with his grand wazīr Shāh Walī Khān overlooking. Untitled album of Indian miniatures, MS, Bodleian Library, Ouseley Add. 166, fol. 43a (Delhi, ca. 1760s?).

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Transliteration and Style

This dissertation draws on sources written in multiple languages, including Arabic, Pashto, Persian, Turkish, Urdu, and others. But as the bulk of sources are in Persian, I have adopted the Persian transliteration scheme suggested by the *International Journal of Middle East Studies* (IJMES). However, certain exceptions and addenda have been deemed necessary.

While employing the IJMES scheme for transliterating consonants, long vowels, and diphthongs, I have relied largely on ‘Alī Akbar Dihkhudā’s *Lughat-nāma* for rendering short vowels. In accordance with the pronunciation of Persian/Dari and Pashto in present-day Afghanistan, and the likely pronunciation of Persian in pre-modern South Asia, I have also adopted the use of the *majhūl* vowels “ē” and “ō” in addition to the *ma‘rūf* vowels “ā,” “ī,” and “ū.” In determining when a *majhūl* vowel is appropriate, I have relied chiefly on Francis J. Steingass’s *Comprehensive Persian-English Dictionary* and Henry G. Raverty’s *A Dictionary of the Puk’hto, Pus’hto, or the Language of the Afghāns*. Hence, the use of the spelling Sadōzay instead of Sadūzay; Shēr Khān instead of Shīr Khān; *bēglarbēg* instead of *bīglarbīg*; etc. For similar reasons, wāw has been transliterated “w” instead of “v” as a consonant and “aw” instead of “au” as a diphthong; hence, *walī* instead of *valī* and *dawlat* instead of *daulat*. Otiose wāw, which often appears after the letter *khā’*, is indicated by ^w in superscript.

Persianate compound names (e.g., ‘Abd Allāh; Zū al-Faqār) have been separated to reflect the way they are commonly spelled in Persian. The Persian *izāfa* is indicated as *-i* in most cases; but when written with a “yā” after words ending in long vowels ā and ū, it is indicated as *-yi*. Where the sources clearly indicate *tā’ marbūṭa* in genitive construct using diacritic marks, it is transliterated as *-t* (as in *Tazkirat al-mulūk*). In cases where word-final *hā’* is unpronounced, the letter “h” has been dropped in transliteration (as in *nāma*).

Arabic, Pashto, and Persian terms that have entered English like sayyid, sufi, khan, etc., are spelled in accordance with *The New Oxford Dictionary of English*. Noteworthy exceptions include the terms *amīr* and *wazīr*, which often take on specific meanings that are not fully captured by their English equivalents amir/emir and vizier.

Well-known toponyms are given in English and without diacritics (e.g., Herat, Peshawar, Lahore). Less well-known toponyms have been transliterated according to the forms in which they appear in the Persian sources and using the above scheme (e.g., Siyālkōt). When they form part of a person's *nisba*, place names are always transliterated.

The bibliography and notes have been formatted in accordance with the 16th edition of *The Chicago Manual of Style*. I have generally maintained the publisher's spelling and naming conventions. But English words forming part of a publisher's name and rendered in Persian, Pashto, or Urdu typescript are written in English. As such, 'Panjābī Adabī Akadīmī' becomes 'Panjābī Adabī Academy'; 'Sindhī Adabī Bord' becomes 'Sindhī Adabī Board'; etc.

Hijrī-qamarī dates, Arabic phrases and hadiths, and the names of well-known Arab personalities follow the Arabic system; thus, Dhū al-Ḥijja instead of Zū al-Ḥijja and Ḥajjāj bin Yūsuf al-Thaqafī instead of Ḥajjāj bin Yūsuf al-Ṣaqafī. But the Persian system has been used for Arabic titles of otherwise Persian sources.

Dates derived from Islamicate primary sources are provided in accordance with the Hijrī-qamarī or Islamic lunar calendar, followed by their Gregorian equivalent. For the sake of convenience, dates derived from most other sources, as well as references to centuries, are given in Gregorian only. The Hijrī-shamsī or solar dating conventions of contemporary Iran and Afghanistan are used primarily for bibliographical references and notes and are indicated with the abbreviation H.sh. to avoid confusion with Hijrī-qamarī dates, which, being far more ubiquitous, are always written without abbreviation.

Table of Transliteration

Consonants:

ب	b	ظ	ẓ
پ	p	ع	‘
ت	t	غ	gh
ث	ṯ	ف	f
ج	j	ق	q
چ	ch	ک	k
ح	ḥ	گ	g
خ	kh	ل	l
د	d	م	m
ذ	ẓ	ن	n
ر	r	و	w
ز	z	ه	h
ژ	zh	ی	y
س	s	ء	’
ش	sh	ة	-t
ص	ṣ	و	aw (diphthong)
ض	ẓ	ی	ay (diphthong)
ط	ṭ		

Vowels:

Short ا	a	Long آ, ا	ā	Doubled آ	-yy
ی	i	ی	ī, ē (<i>majhūl</i>)	و	-ww
و	u	و	ū, ō (<i>majhūl</i>)		

Abbreviations

AACHA	<i>Aḥwāl-i aqwām-i chahārgāna-i Afghān</i> by Maḥmūd al-Mūsawī
AAN	‘Ālam-ārā-yi Nādirī by Muḥammad Kāẓim Marwī
ḤSh	<i>Ḥusayn Shāhī</i> by Imām al-Dīn Ḥusaynī
MT	<i>Majma‘ al-tawārīkh</i> by Muḥammad Khalīl Mar‘ashī
MTbN	<i>Mujmal al-tawārīkh ba‘d-i Nādiriyya</i> by Abū al-Ḥasan Gulistāna
SAA	<i>Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī</i> , Anonymous
ST	<i>Sirāj al-tawārīkh</i> by Fayẓ Muḥammad Kātib Hazāra
TAAA	<i>Tārīkh-i ‘ālam-ārā-yi ‘Abbāsī</i> by Iskandar Bēg Turkmān Munshī
TASH	<i>Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī</i> by Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī
TKhJ	<i>Tārīkh-i Khān Jahānī wa makhzan-i Afghānī</i> by Ni‘mat Allāh Harawī
TMA	<i>Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān</i> by ‘Alī Muḥammad Khān Khudaka Sadōzay
TN	<i>Tārīkh-i Nādirī [Jahāngushā-yi Nādirī]</i> by Mahdī Khān Astarābādī
TSu	<i>Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī</i> by Sulṭān Muḥammad Khān Bārakzay
ZA	<i>Zubdat al-akhbār</i> by Shēr Muḥammad Nādir

Introduction

I.1: The Emergence of Abdālī-Durrānī Rule in Historical Perspective

The Abdālī-Durrānī tribal confederacy (*ulūs*) has had a long history of involvement in the politics of the frontier region connecting the Iranian plateau and the Indian subcontinent, or what in this dissertation is referred to as Indo-Khurasan. This history may be traced back to the second half of the sixteenth century, when Abdālī pastoralists, one of many nomadic Afghan-Pashtun tribal groups active in the Qandahar region, periodically interacted with local officials representing the competing empires of Mughal India and Safavid Iran. A turning point in Abdālī history was the rapid growth of the confederacy's political authority at the turn of the eighteenth century, which coincided with the declining power of the Safavids and Mughals.¹ It was at this juncture that the Abdālī established rule over Herat (ca. 1128–44/1716–32) and then served as mercenaries in the army of the post-Safavid Iranian monarch, Nādir Shāh Afshārī (r. 1148–60/1736–47),² before forming an autonomous polity centred in Qandahar under the aegis of Aḥmad Khān (r. 1160–86/1747–72).³ A leading figure

¹ For studies surveying the final years of Safavid rule, see Laurence Lockhart, *The Fall of the Ṣafavī Dynasty and the Afghan Occupation of Persia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958); John Foran, "The Long Fall of the Safavid Dynasty," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 24, no. 2 (1992): 281–304; and Rudi Matthee, *Persia in Crisis: Safavid Decline and the Fall of Isfahan* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2012).

² On the career of Nādir Shāh, see Laurence Lockhart, *Nadir Shah: A Critical Study Based Mainly upon Contemporary Sources* (London: Luzac, 1938); Peter Avery, "Nadir Shah and the Afsharid Legacy," in *The Cambridge History of Iran*, vol. 7, *From Nadir Shah to the Islamic Republic*, ed. Peter Avery, Gavin Hambly, and Charles Melville (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 3–62; and Ernest Tucker, *Nadir Shah's Quest for Legitimacy in Post-Safavid Iran* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2006).

³ A description of the multiple meanings of the term Qandahar is warranted here. Prior to the reign of Aḥmad Shāh Durrānī, "Qandahar" denoted both the large province known by that name as well as the now desolate city Old Qandahar, which was destroyed by Nādir Shāh in 1738 and superseded by the newly constructed Nādirābād as provincial capital (see §5.5). Old Qandahar city should be distinguished from present-day Qandahar city, which was first named Ashraf al-bilād Aḥmadshāhī (lit., "the most noble of cities Aḥmadshāhī"), or simply Aḥmadshāhī, on account of its construction being commissioned by Aḥmad Shāh at the beginning of

of the Abdālī aristocracy, Aḥmad Khān inaugurated his reign as inheritor of the Mughal, Safavid, and Nādirid imperial mandates by establishing a large empire, which was based on long-standing models of Perso- or Irano-Islamic statecraft and Turkic military organization, while also rebranding the Abdālī “Durrānī” after his personal epithet, Durr-i Durrān, or “Pearl of Pearls.” The Durrānī formed the central pillar of Aḥmad Shāh’s imperial project and dominated the politics of his empire, the core territory of which in modern times came to be known as Afghanistan, where their considerable influence continues into the present.

Despite their importance to the early-modern history of Islamic Asia, the process whereby the Abdālī-Durrānī went from being a relatively obscure tribal confederacy active on the margins of the Safavid and Mughal empires to founders of a vast empire, which, at its height in the reign of Aḥmad Shāh, encompassed large swathes of Central, West, and South Asia, is poorly understood. Several factors may account for our limited knowledge of this crucial development. One is related to the radical political upheavals that divided the Sadōzay (ca. 1160–1233/1747–1818) and Bārakzay (ca. 1259–1393/1843–1973) dynastic eras of Durrānī rule. In particular, after a prolonged and complex internecine conflict between the years 1233/1818 and 1259/1843, the Sadōzay dynasty founded by Aḥmad Shāh was supplanted by the leaders of the Bārakzay, a collateral line of the Durrānī confederacy. As

1169/1756. See §4.1 for a brief description of the geographic extent of Qandahar province in the early Mughal period, and §6.5 for details surrounding the construction of Aḥmadshāhī (present-day Qandahar city). On the history of Qandahar, see W. Barthold, *An Historical Geography of Iran*, trans. Svat Soucek, ed. C. E. Bosworth (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 74–75; C. E. Bosworth, “Kandahar,” in *Historic Cities of the Islamic World*, ed. C. E. Bosworth (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 268–71; C. E. Bosworth, *The Later Ghaznavids: Splendour and Decay* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1977), 149–50; *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., s.v. “Qandahar” (by C. E. Bosworth); *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. “Kandahar iv. From the Mongol Invasion Through the Safavid Era” (by Rudi Matthee and Hiroyuki Mashita); *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. “Kandahar v. In the 19th Century” (by Shah Mahmoud Hanifi); Klaus Fischer, “Zur Lage von Kandahar an Landverbindungen zwischen Iran und Indien,” *Bonner Jahrbücher des Reinischen Landesmuseums in Bonn und des Vereins von Altertumsfreunden im Rheinlande* 167 (1967): 144–53; and Fārūq Anṣārī, *Awzāʿ-i siyāsī, ijtimāʿī wa jughrāfiyā-yi tārikhī-i Qandahār (baʿd az Islām tā pāyān-i ʿaṣr-i Ṣafawī)*, vol. 1 (Qum: Majlisī, 1380 H.sh./2001), 35–94.

the majority of writings on the Abdālī-Durrānī that have come down to us may be traced back to the period of Bārakzay rule, the scholarship, by extension, has been focused far more on the era of the Bārakzay than the Sadōzay, when the foundations of Durrānī rule were laid.

If the period of Sadōzay rule has been neglected in the scholarship, the history of the Abdālī-Durrānī prior to Aḥmad Shāh's accession has been even more so. Numerous studies about Afghanistan and/or the Durrānī polity, for example, take as their narrative point of departure the accession of Aḥmad Shāh in 1160/1747, which is sometimes (albeit controversially) regarded as the year of Afghanistan's founding.⁴ By contrast, the "pre-Durrānī" history of the confederacy is marginalized and, excepting rare cases, treated as an afterthought.⁵ This bias is a legacy of Durrānī-era historiography, which emphasizes the activities of the Abdālī-cum-Durrānī after the establishment of Durrānī rule—its proverbial "golden age"—but offers comparatively little information about its more modest origins.

I.2: Themes and Organization

To bridge the gap in knowledge between the Abdālī and Durrānī phases of the confederacy's past, this study endeavors to trace the history of the Abdālī-Durrānī from their emergence in the historical record to the formation of the Durrānī empire in the reign of Aḥmad Shāh as well as his immediate successors, a period spanning roughly from 1550 to 1818. A number of thematic strands run through the course of this investigation: In addition

⁴ The opinion that Aḥmad Shāh should not be regarded as the founder of the nation-state of Afghanistan is shared by many authors. An example is Louis Dupree, who wrote, "Most Afghan historians, followed sheeplike by western scholars, consider 1747 (Ahmad Shah Durrani) the beginning of the modern Afghan state. I disagree..." See Louis Dupree, *Afghanistan*, 2nd ed. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978), xix. Whether or not the "Afghan historians" alluded to are the ultimate source of this assertion is up for debate.

⁵ Among the few but important exceptions are the following publications dedicated to the Abdālī-Durrānī: Major Robert Leech, "An Account of the Early Abdalees," *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* 14, no. 162 (1845): 445–70; and 'Abd al-Ḥayy Ḥabībī, "Da Abdāliyānū Mashāhīr," *Da Kābul Kālanay* (1325 H.sh./1945): 200–18.

to analyzing relations between the Abdālī-Durrānī leaders and external states (Safavid, Mughal, and Nādirid), this study examines, to the extent that the sources allow, the social and political organization of the confederacy. Although largely overlooked in studies of the Abdālī-Durrānī, this study attempts to establish that an understanding of the internal dynamics of the tribal confederacy, especially the intra-tribal rivalries among the Abdālī leadership, is necessary to make sense of the emergence of Durrānī rule in the reign of Aḥmad Shāh.

Another important theme of this dissertation is the transformation of the Abdālī-Durrānī from a confederacy on the margins of empire to imperial powers in their own right. In tracing this evolution, the present study has benefitted from analyzing the social, political, and cultural transition undergone by past ruling dynasties of Khurasan and Central Asia, such as the Ilkhanids and Timurids.⁶ While these dynasties were in many cases active centuries earlier and in unique political milieus, the Durrānī, in their efforts to establish a more centralized, sedentary state based on Irano-Islamic models of governance, underwent a similar process of transition and acculturation.

With these themes in mind, this dissertation seeks to answer a number of questions, such as: What are the sources and what can they tell us about Abdālī-Durrānī history? How does an analysis of the confederacy's pre-Durrānī history improve our understanding of Aḥmad Shāh's rise to power? In what ways does this history explain Aḥmad Shāh's curious decision to rename the Abdālī "Durrānī"? How was the name change related to Aḥmad Shāh's imperial aims? How did these imperial aims affect relations with his fellow tribesmen and subjects locally, and with contemporary powers in Iran, India, Central Asia, and beyond

⁶ The case of the Timurids is studied in Maria E. Subtelny, *Timurids in Transition: Turko-Persian Politics and Acculturation in Medieval Iran* (Leiden: Brill, 2007). For a description of the acculturation process undergone by the Mongol *amīrs* of Ilkhanid Iran, see Jean Aubin, *Émirs mongols et vizirs persans dans les remous de l'acculturation* (Paris: Association pour l'Avancement des Études Iraniennes, 1995).

regionally? And what are some of the enduring legacies of the Durrānī polity that Aḥmad Shāh is credited with founding? In the process of investigating answers to these and related questions, the following theses have been advanced in this dissertation:

I. The origins of the Abdālī are vague and remain the subject of debate. But while the Abdālī are often linked to the Chishtī saint, Abū Aḥmad Abdāl, I argue that this connection is actually a relatively recent invention of the late-eighteenth century that was designed to bolster the legitimacy of the Durrānī monarchs in Herat, the province in which the shrine town of Chisht-i Sharīf is located, in direct response to the threat of an impending Qājār invasion of the region. I instead propose a link between the Abdālī and Ḥasan Abdāl, the patron saint of Qandahar, which, I would argue, is more plausible on historical grounds than the oft-cited connection between the Abdālī and Abū Aḥmad Abdāl. I also describe another theory postulated by authors writing inside and outside Afghanistan that links the Abdālī to Hephthalite groups who settled in the territory of Indo-Khurasan in ancient times. While tentative, the hypotheses relating the Abdālī to the Hephthalites or to Ḥasan Abdāl would explain the origins of the otherwise obscure tribal name “Abdālī.”

II. The Abdālī are attested in Mughal and Safavid sources from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Safavid and Mughal governors of Qandahar patronized Abdālī clients to patrol its borders and ensure the steady flow of trade through the province, which was an important trade corridor linking the markets of Central Asia and Iran to India. On account of their local influence, the chiefs of the Abdālī confederacy were ideally suited to fill the power vacuum created by the breakdown of Safavid and Mughal authority throughout Indo-Khurasan. The Ghilzay Afghans are usually credited with ending Safavid rule in Qandahar in the early 1700s. But it was an Abdālī-Ghilzay alliance, cemented through the marriage of the Ghilzay chief, Mīr Ways Hōtakī, to the daughter of the Abdālī chief, Ja‘far Khān Sadōzay, that

played an integral, albeit largely neglected role in the Afghan revolt against the Safavid governor of Qandahar. A product of this alliance, Mīr Maḥmūd b. Mīr Ways, would later spearhead the Afghan invasion of Isfahan in 1135/1722 that brought an end to Safavid rule.

III. The formation of the Durrānī empire is usually attributed to Aḥmad Shāh. But the establishment of Abdālī-Durrānī rule was, in fact, a lengthy process that spanned several decades. While the Abdālī had long been active in the politics of Indo-Khurasan, the rapid growth in their political authority was tied to the breakdown of Safavid rule in the region. Specifically, after the Ghilzay and their allies assumed control of Qandahar in ca. 1121/1709, a large contingent of Abdālī made their way to Herat and assumed control of the province in place of its Safavid-appointed governor. Nādir Shāh sought to nip the growing political autonomy of the Abdālī in the bud, but after his death in 1160/1747 the confederacy's leaders reasserted authority over Herat and other former Safavid and Nādirid provinces. When considered in historical perspective, the establishment of Abdālī-Durrānī rule may be regarded as the culmination of a broad historical process initiated decades before Aḥmad Shāh's accession.

IV. On assuming power, Aḥmad Shāh adopted the epithet Durr-i Durrān, or "Pearl of Pearls." While the meaning and significance of this epithet has long perplexed scholars, I argue that the epithet has esoteric and politico-theological implications. Like many rulers before him, Aḥmad Shāh asserted his status as a divinely ordained monarch whose temporal authority was mandated by God. I argue that the epithet Pearl of Pearls is an allusion to the metaphorical pearl of gnosis, possession of which was the source of the various supernatural abilities attributed to Aḥmad Shāh. The intertwined esoteric and political connotations of the "Pearl of Pearls" have gone largely overlooked by generations of local and foreign authors writing on Aḥmad Shāh and the foundations of Durrānī rule.

V. Aḥmad Shāh's decision to rename the Abdālī "Durrānī," which derives from his royal epithet, Durr-i Durrān, has also long perplexed scholars. In general, scholars regard the names Abdālī and Durrānī as synonymous and use them interchangeably while eliding context surrounding the adoption of the new name "Durrānī" and its significance. As shown in this study, the adoption of the name Durrānī was accompanied by a prohibition of the use of the older designation "Abdālī." I argue this prohibition was one of various policies Aḥmad Shāh introduced in response to the rivalry for paramount leadership of the confederacy that emerged after Nādir Shāh's death. Aḥmad Shāh was the eventual victor in this intra-tribal rivalry and sought to sever ties with the confederacy's contentious pre-Durrānī past by banning the use of the name Abdālī and associating his tribal following with the new "Durrānī" ruling dispensation, which was associated primarily with his person. Insofar as Aḥmad Shāh distanced himself from the older name and even prohibited its use, it would be inaccurate to refer to him and his Durrānī support base as "Abdālī."

VI. The conventional view that Aḥmad Shāh was the founding father of Afghanistan is untenable on multiple grounds. Unlike the territorially defined country of Afghanistan, the boundaries of Aḥmad Shāh's polity were fluid and expanding. Moreover, at its height the Durrānī empire encompassed parts of the regions that were at the time known as Turkistan, Khurasan, and Hindustan and that are today within the borders of Afghanistan, Pakistan, and the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir. When considering the principle governing institutions of the Durrānī polity, it becomes apparent that Aḥmad Shāh ruled not a nation-state in the modern sense but a pre-modern formation along Weberian, patrimonial-bureaucratic lines. Like various other pre-modern empires, Aḥmad Shāh adopted a patrimonial system of governance based on his charismatic authority, as well as an army and bureaucratic administration committed primarily to his personal political aims. I thus

argue that the Durrānī polity was not synonymous with Afghanistan, even if it may be regarded a distant precursor to the Afghan nation-state.

VII. Although the view that Aḥmad Shāh founded Afghanistan is anachronistic, his reign did have a lasting effect on the country, particularly its political culture. An important legacy of Aḥmad Shāh's reign was the tension that developed between him and his tribal subjects, which stemmed from his efforts to establish a strong, centralized state. Aḥmad Shāh was able to mitigate these tense relations with his tribal subjects through conciliation and/or coercion. However, the centralizing efforts of his successors led to dissatisfaction among segments of the Durrānī population who repeatedly sought to assert their autonomy. In an environment of dissatisfaction with the rule of Aḥmad Shāh's descendants, the leaders of the Bārakzay clan ousted the Sadōzay from power and established a neo-Durrānī ruling dispensation. But despite inheriting the Sadōzay ruling mandate, the Bārakzay proved unable to maintain the territorial integrity of the Durrānī empire. They instead ruled tenuously over the remnants of the Durrānī polity that would later form the core of what is today Afghanistan.

In terms of organization, this dissertation has been divided into six chapters. In Chapter 1, I review the main primary sources to be investigated in this study. While many of these sources have been utilized in previous studies, others have for various reasons been used sparingly, if not entirely overlooked, in the scholarship despite their relevance to the study of Abdālī-Durrānī history. This chapter thus addresses the need for a fresh appraisal of the broad array of sources on the history of the Abdālī-Durrānī up to and including the reign of Aḥmad Shāh.

In Chapter 2, I review the scholarship related to Abdālī-Durrānī history. This analysis points to some of the limitations posed by the scholarly literature about the Abdālī-Durrānī,

particularly the uncritical treatment of the primary sources. Specific examples include the tendency to rely more on derivative secondary sources than on original primary sources; take the sources at face value despite the historical problems they pose; and read the sources in piecemeal fashion rather than comparatively. The overarching objective of this chapter is to highlight some of the misconceptions prevalent in the scholarship that this dissertation seeks to address.

The three subsequent chapters focus on the pre-Durrānī era, or what may be termed the “Abdālī” phase, of the confederacy’s history. In Chapter 3, I offer an analysis of the prehistory of the Abdālī. This chapter considers various theories related to the confederacy’s obscure origins, including its supposed association with such Muslim saints of Indo-Khurasan as Abū Aḥmad Abdāl, whose shrine is in the town of Chisht in Herat, and Ḥasan Abdāl, whose shrine is in Qandahar. This chapter also discusses the theory linking the Abdālī to Hephthalite groups who settled in Indo-Khurasan in ancient times. Beyond considering the confederacy’s putative origins, the chapter outlines how Afghan histories beginning in the early Mughal period depicted the Abdālī within the intricate network that is the Afghan tribal system.

Chapter 4 examines the early history of the Abdālī, a period covering the mid-sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (ca. 1550–1650s). At that time the Abdālī were one of many Afghan-Pashtun tribal groups active in the region of Qandahar, which was a bone of contention between the Safavid and Mughal polities. This chapter analyzes chronicles produced at the Safavid and Mughal courts that periodically describe the significant role played by Abdālī chiefs who, as clients of both states, patrolled the province’s trade routes and wielded influence over local Afghan-Pashtun tribes. This chapter also seeks to show how authors of genealogical histories like the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* and the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i*

‘ālī-shān incorporated elements of the narratives of the aforesaid Safavid and Mughal chronicles into the Abdālī-Durrānī’s lore as a way to establish a more elaborate and coherent tradition of the confederacy’s otherwise vague past.

Chapter 5 examines the early foundations of Abdālī-Durrānī rule in Indo-Khurasan between ca. 1650s and 1747. This crucial transitional period coincided with the decline and collapse of the Safavid empire as well as the rise and rule of the post-Safavid monarch, Nādir Shāh. Among the topics covered is the pivotal role of the Abdālī in the formation of Ghilzay rule in Qandahar; the establishment of autonomous rule in Herat; and the advancement of Nādir Shāh’s political aspirations. This analysis is aimed at offering historical context surrounding the formation of Durrānī authority in Qandahar under the charismatic leadership of Aḥmad Shāh.

Chapter 6 traces the formation of the Durrānī polity in the reign of Aḥmad Shāh and his successors. But rather than focus on battles and diplomatic relations with neighbouring powers—topics that have been dealt with in previous studies of Aḥmad Shāh—emphasis is placed more on the internal organization of the early Durrānī polity. I argue that Aḥmad Shāh’s rise to power is best understood in relation to the rivalry among various Abdālī chiefs over the question of who would replace Nādir Shāh as ruler. I suggest that it was this intra-tribal conflict that compelled Aḥmad Shāh to break the power of the Abdālī chiefs and to reconfigure the Abdālī-cum-Durrānī confederacy in his own image, as reflected in his decision to rename the Abdālī “Durrānī.” In this chapter I also describe how Aḥmad Shāh: i) advanced his political ambitions by forming a new ruling dispensation based on the steppe tradition of world-empire and Irano-Islamic models of statecraft; and ii) legitimated his policies by appealing to Islam and coopting the support of the religious classes, especially spiritual leaders of the Mujaddidī-Naqshbandī Sufi Order to which he was closely affiliated.

This study challenges the prevailing view that the Durrānī polity was the single-handed creation of Aḥmad Shāh by arguing that the establishment of Abdālī-Durrānī rule was an ongoing process that unfolded over the *longue durée*. I have attempted to demonstrate that the confederacy's pre-Durrānī history was not inconsequential but that it played a decisive role in laying the groundwork for the emergence of the Durrānī polity. While giving attention to the confederacy's early history, I argue that Aḥmad Shāh's reign was a significant turning point insofar as it witnessed the transformation of the Abdālī confederacy into the dominant landowning and ruling class of the Durrānī empire. I show how this transformation was accompanied by the Persian acculturation of the ruling elite and the trend towards forming a sedentary polity that resembled the Weberian model of the patrimonial-bureaucratic state. I also show how the transformation of the Abdālī into the Durrānī was never fully completed, as the efforts of Aḥmad Shāh's descendants, i.e. the Sadōzay, to centralize the Durrānī state was met with stiff resistance and they were eventually replaced by the Bārakzay. Despite the overthrow of the Sadōzay dynasty Aḥmad Shāh founded, his rule had a lasting impact on the political culture of Indo-Khurasan, particularly of those territories that presently constitute Afghanistan, into the modern era.

I.3: Note on Sources and Studies

As several prominent academics have noted, the scholarly community habitually overlooks the wealth of sources about Afghanistan and its inhabitants. This is especially true of the large number of primary source texts written in Persian, the literary language of the territory encompassing present-day Afghanistan historically as well as the language of

contemporary scholarship in the country.⁷ It is unsurprising, then, that the scholarly literature on the Abdālī-Durrānī consists largely of studies that seldom make extensive use of the primary sources.

Few studies of the Abdālī consider the data about the confederacy found in Mughal, Safavid, and Nādirid chronicles even though, notwithstanding their court-centricity and other biases, these works offer useful information about the Abdālī just as they begin to consistently appear in the historical record. Another important repository of information about the Abdālī is the corpus of locally produced Afghan genealogies written on the multitude of Afghan-Pashtun tribes generally but also in some cases on individual tribal groups like the Abdālī-Durrānī. Two works of the latter type are the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* and the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān az awlād-i Sadō mīr-i Afghān*, each of which traces the history of the Abdālī confederacy from its putative origins. Despite casting important light on the otherwise dark “pre-Durrānī” period of Abdālī history, both works remain largely unknown and therefore understudied, particularly in their original Persian.

Likewise, with respect to the reign of Aḥmad Shāh, several primary sources have also long escaped the attention of scholars. Prominent among them is the *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, a chronicle composed by Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, a secretary (*munshī*) employed at Aḥmad Shāh’s court. Although arguably the single most informative source on the reign of Aḥmad Shāh and hence of the formative period of Durrānī rule, the *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī* has been largely

⁷ On the neglect of indigenous sources and problems arising from doing so, see Robert D. McChesney, “Recent Work on the History of Afghanistan,” *Journal of Persianate Studies* 5 (2012): 64–66; and Robert D. McChesney, “On Mobility in Afghan History,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 45, no. 1 (2013): 135–37. Marcus Schadl also notes the tendency to neglect local sources in favour of those written by Western authors, especially British colonial observers who produced a substantial literature on Afghanistan and its inhabitants. As Schadl argues, to the extent that the scholarly literature neglects indigenous sources and is based on “outsider” perceptions, it often reproduces ill-informed accounts about the country; see Marcus Schadl, “The Man Outside: The Problem with the External Perception of Afghanistan in Historical Sources,” *Asien: The German Journal on Contemporary Asia* 104 (2007): 88–105.

unstudied, even by authors of works dedicated to the monarch. In his study of the primary sources on Aḥmad Shāh's reign, the German linguist Oskar Mann briefly wrote about the passages of the *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī* found in a partial manuscript of the work located in the British Library—until recently, the only known copy of the text.⁸ Writing in Afghanistan, the scholar Mīr Ghulām Muḥammad Ghubār made extensive use of primary sources for his biographical study of Aḥmad Shāh but did not consult the British Library manuscript or Mann's study of it.⁹ Shortly after Ghubār's publication, the Punjabi historian Ganda Singh wrote an English-language study of Aḥmad Shāh and included the British Library manuscript among his sources consulted yet referenced it occasionally only.¹⁰

After the publication of the studies by the above-mentioned scholars, a manuscript of an almost complete version of the *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī* was discovered in the Institute of Oriental Studies in Saint Petersburg.¹¹ Thanks to the publication of a facsimile edition of this manuscript in 1974, the *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī* has been subjected to an unprecedented degree of analysis.¹² Among the first Afghan scholars to utilize it was 'Azīz al-Dīn Wakīlī Pōpalza'ī,

⁸ Oskar Mann, "Quellenstudien zur Geschichte des Aḥmed Šāh Durrānī (1747–1773)," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 52 (1898): 97–118, 161–72, 323–58.

⁹ Mīr Ghulām Muḥammad Ghubār, *Aḥmad Shāh Bābā-yi Afghān* (Kabul: Maṭba'a-i 'Umūmī, 1322 H.sh./1944).

¹⁰ Ganda Singh, *Aḥmad Shah Durrani: Father of Modern Afghanistan* (London: Asia Publishing House, 1959).

¹¹ There are some unfinished sections of this manuscript—e.g., the lacuna at the end of the section on Aḥmad Shāh's ancestry (fols. 1:12b–13a) and the blank spaces where drawings were likely meant to be added (fols. 2:326a–27b, 2:330b, 2:335a, 2:390b–92a, 2:442b–43a, 2:488b–89a, 2:507b–508a, 2:528a, 2:578b–79a, 2:584b, 2:586b, 2:610a, 2:617b)—that suggest further additions were intended. On this point see Amin Tarzi, "Tarikh-i Ahmad Shahi: The First History of 'Afghanistan,'" in *Afghan History through Afghan Eyes*, ed. Nile Green (London: Hurst, 2016), 81n6. Nevertheless, the Saint Petersburg manuscript is the most complete extant copy of the TASH. For additional details on the manuscript, see Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī al-Munshī ibn Ibrāhīm al-Jāmī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, fac. ed. Dōstmurād Sayyid Murādōf, 2 vols. (Moscow: Nauka, 1974), 1:1–84. Bibliographical details on the various critical editions of the TASH published after the facsimile edition by Murādōf, which are based on the Saint Petersburg manuscript, can be found in the bibliography.

¹² Recent studies that utilize the TASH to varying degrees include Jos J. L. Gommans, *The Rise of the Indo-Afghan Empire, c. 1710–1780* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 56–66 passim; Robert D. McChesney, *Waqf in Central Asia: Four Hundred*

who wrote a study of Aḥmad Shāh, *Aḥmad Shāh: Wārīs wa mujaddid-i inspirātūrī-i Afghānistān*, based largely on Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī's work.¹³ But like many of Wakīlī Pōpalza'ī's earlier works, *Aḥmad Shāh* poses several problems that researchers would do well to take heed of. As a lineal descendent of Aḥmad Shāh's grand *amīr*, 'Abd Allāh Khān Pōpalzay, Wakīlī Pōpalza'ī adopts an uncritical and deferential tone towards Aḥmad Shāh and the Durrānī.¹⁴ Many a historian will also take issue with Wakīlī Pōpalza'ī's haphazard use of sources; though he includes lists of sources consulted, unreferenced statements and claims abound in his writings. Despite these problems, Wakīlī Pōpalza'ī's publications are of great value largely because of their inclusion of copies of various documents composed at the court of the Sadōzay monarchs, many of which were in the private collection of the author's family. Wakīlī Pōpalza'ī's *Aḥmad Shāh* is also unique insofar as it is one of few studies of Aḥmad Shāh to make extensive use of the *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*. Notwithstanding Wakīlī Pōpalza'ī's study,

Years in the History of a Muslim Shrine, 1480–1889 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), 219–25; and Jonathan L. Lee, *The 'Ancient Supremacy': Bukhara, Afghanistan and the Battle for Balkh, 1731–1901* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 73–92 passim. Other recent studies that analyze the TASH include Senzil Nawid, "Historiography in the Sadduzai Era: Language and Narration," in *Literacy in the Persianate World: Writing and the Social Order*, ed. Brian Spooner and William L. Hanaway (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, 2012), 234–78; Christine Noelle-Karimi, "Afghan Politics and the Indo-Persian Literary Realm: The Durrani Rulers and Their Portrayal in Eighteenth-Century Historiography," in *Afghan History through Afghan Eyes*, ed. Nile Green (London: Hurst, 2016), 53–77; and Tarzi, "*Tarikh-i Ahmad Shahi*," 79–96.

¹³ 'Azīz al-Dīn Wakīlī Pōpalza'ī, *Aḥmad Shāh: Wārīs wa mujaddid-i inspirātūrī-i Afghānistān*, vol. 1 (Kabul: Wizārat-i Ittīlā'āt wa Kultūr, 1359 H.sh./1980); and Senzil Nawid, "Writing National History: Afghan Historiography in the Twentieth Century," in *Afghan History through Afghan Eyes*, ed. Nile Green (London: Hurst, 2016), 198–99. Note that the author's name appears in different forms depending on the publication consulted. In this dissertation, I have used 'Azīz al-Dīn Wakīlī Pōpalza'ī, which is the form in which the author's name appears on the title page of *Aḥmad Shāh: Wārīs wa mujaddid-i inspirātūrī-i Afghānistān*—the most recent of his cited publications.

¹⁴ Ashraf Ghani, "Production and Domination: Afghanistan, 1747–1901" (PhD diss., Columbia University, 1982), xvii, 116–17; and 'Azīz al-Dīn Wakīlī Pōpalza'ī, *Timūr Shāh Durrānī*, 2 vols. (Kabul: Anjuman-i Tārīkh-i Afghānistān, 1346 H.sh./1967), 2:605–8 passim.

the *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī* continues to be neglected, including by authors who have recently written works about Aḥmad Shāh and the early Durrānī polity.¹⁵

Another important source for the study of Abdālī-Durrānī history is the report produced about the confederacy by Henry C. Rawlinson, a political agent of the British East India Company who served in Qandahar during the First Anglo-Afghan War (1839–42). While stationed in Qandahar, Rawlinson composed a report on the Durrānī landowners of the province based on documents produced at the court of Aḥmad Shāh.¹⁶ In the absence of original copies of the court documents in question, Rawlinson’s report represents a de-facto primary source on the reign of Aḥmad Shāh that has habitually been understudied in the scholarship despite the valuable data it provides with respect to land-holding patterns in Qandahar during the formative period of Durrānī rule.

The aforesaid sources are samples of a far larger corpus of documents containing data on the history of the Abdālī-Durrānī to be examined in this dissertation. While some of these sources have been analyzed to varying degrees in previous studies, others have been

¹⁵ On the neglect of the *TASH* by prominent historians writing in Afghanistan, see Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, ed. Murādōf, 1:79. Other Examples include the Multan-based academic Ashiq Muhammad Khan Durrani, who has written extensively on the Sadōzay; see Ashiq Muhammad Khan Durrani, *Multān under the Afghāns, 1752–1818* (Multan: Bazme Saqafat, 1981); and Ashiq Muhammad Khan Durrani, *History of Multan (From the Early Period to 1849 A.D.)* (Lahore: Vanguard, 1991). The Afghan journalist, Nabi Misdaq, wrote a study of Aḥmad Shāh wherein the British Library manuscript is cited but not examined in any depth; see Nabi Misdaq, *Aḥmad Shah Durrani, 1722–1772: Founder and First King of Modern Afghanistan* (Delhi: Irfan Cultural Center, 1997), 49n1, 61, 108. Misdaq’s reference to the author of the *TASH* as “Mohammed [sic] Ul-Husaini” along with the absence of reference to the facsimile edition of the Saint Petersburg manuscript or any of the later critical editions based on it, demonstrates his lack of familiarity with the work. The same is true of his more recent publication; see Nabi Misdaq, *Afghanistan: Political Frailty and External Interference* (London: Routledge, 2006), 333n1, 335. In a more recent Persian-language publication on the history of “contemporary Afghanistan” and the reign of Aḥmad Shāh, A’zam Sīstānī-Bārakzay refers to neither the British Library manuscript nor any of the editions of the *TASH* published since the discovery of the Saint Petersburg manuscript; see A’zam Sīstānī[-Bārakzay], *Ẓuhūr-i Afghānistān-i mu’āṣir wa Aḥmad Shāh Abdālī* (Peshawar: Dānish, 1386 H.sh./2007), 417–21.

¹⁶ Henry C. Rawlinson, “Report on the Dooranee Tribes, 19th April 1841,” in Ludwig W. Adamec, ed., *Historical and Political Gazetteer of Afghanistan*, vol. 5, *Kandahar and South-Central Afghanistan* (Graz: Akademische Druck- und Verlagsanstalt, 1980), 509–77.

published recently or are only available in manuscript form and are thus yet to be systematically analyzed by scholars. For this reason, one of the stated aims of this study is to build upon the existing literature on the Abdālī-Durrānī by broadening the scope of analysis to include a wider array of primary sources on the subject. Admittedly, this examination of the primary sources is far from exhaustive as many new sources are sure to be discovered in the future. But since many of the works relied on for this study are largely unknown or yet to be subjected to critical analysis by historians, the first two chapters offer a detailed analysis of the sources and scholarship, respectively, as they relate to the history of the Abdālī-Durrānī up to and including the reign of Aḥmad Shāh.

I.4: Note on Geographic Terms

The Abdālī-Durrānī have long been active in a region that was known by various names throughout history and thus eludes precise definition. But this conundrum cannot be resolved by simply deferring to the term Afghanistan, as contemporary authors are wont to do, for doing so presents many historical problems. In the first instance, it should be emphasized that the meaning of “Afghanistan” varied according to time and place. The term is mentioned in certain post-Mongol sources as a geographic marker denoting the mountainous region located roughly to the south and east of the Hindu Kush and to the north and west of the Indus River—or the earliest attested homeland of the Afghans (read: Pashtuns).¹⁷ By contrast, the country currently known as Afghanistan began to take shape in

¹⁷ As several authors have noted, the geographic term “Afghanistan” is found in sources dating back to the fourteenth century, though its geographic extent was far more limited relative to present-day Afghanistan; see M. Hassan Kakar, *Afghān, Afghānistān wa mukhtaṣarī az kūshishhā-yi Afghānhā barā-yi tashkīl-i dawlat dar Hindūstān, Fārs wa Afghānistān* (Kabul: Kabul University Press, 1357 H.sh./1978), 8–11; Christine Noelle-Karimi, “Khurasan and Its Limits: Changing Concepts of Territory from Pre-Modern to Modern Times,” in *Iran und iranisch geprägte Kulturen: Studien zum 65. Geburtstag von Bert G. Fragner*, ed. Markus Ritter, Ralph Kauz, and Birgitt Hoffmann

the course of the nineteenth century, when British colonial officials of India employed the name as a blanket term referring to the far broader domain under the political authority of the Durrānī state.¹⁸ Generally speaking, neither the writings of these British officials nor of the countless later authors who uncritically reproduced their epistemologies distinguish between the pre-modern and modern meanings and applications of “Afghanistan.”

Studies that associate the Abdālī-Durrānī with Afghanistan scarcely acknowledge the fact that “Afghanistan” is rarely used as a geographic term in sources predating the nineteenth century. This includes chronicles produced under the auspices of various Timurid, Mughal, Safavid and post-Safavid rulers who exercised authority over the territories comprising what is today Afghanistan in the pre-Durrānī era. The same is true of documents produced at the court of Aḥmad Shāh, which are noteworthy for not containing any references to “Afghanistan” despite the fact that the latter was widely regarded as the country’s “founding father.”¹⁹ On the other hand, geographic terms like Turkistan, Khurasan and Hindustan are regularly encountered in sources produced in the period under

(Wiesbaden: Dr. Ludwig Reichert, 2008) 18n37; and Christine Noelle-Karimi, *The Pearl in Its Midst: Herat and the Mapping of Khurasan (15th–19th Centuries)* (Vienna: VOAW, 2014), 70n185.

¹⁸ The historian Mīr Muḥammad Ṣiddīq Farhang describes a pact signed between the Qājārs and British in 1801 that contains what is believed to be the earliest use of the name “Afghanistan” for a distinct political entity; see Mīr Muḥammad Ṣiddīq Farhang, *Afghānistān dar panj qarn-i akhīr*, vol. 1. (Alexandria, VA, 1988; rev. ed., Mashhad: Dirakhshish, 1371 H.sh./1992), 193–94; see also Maḥmūd Maḥmūd, *Tārīkh-i rawābiṭ-i siyāsī-i Īrān wa Inglīs dar qarn-i nūzdahum-i milādī*, 6th ed., 8 vols. (Tehran: Iqbāl, 1367 H.sh./1988), 1:34; and Angela Parvanta, “Afghanistan – Land of the Afghans? On the Genesis of a Problematic State Denomination,” in *Afghanistan – A Country without a State*, ed. Christine Noelle-Karimi, Conrad Schetter, and Reinhard Schlagintweit (Frankfurt: IKO, 2002), 18–19. For more on British conceptions of Afghanistan’s territory, see Benjamin D. Hopkins, *The Making of Modern Afghanistan* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 1–5 passim.

¹⁹ This same point has been recently made by Noelle-Karimi and Tarzi; see Noelle-Karimi, “Afghan Politics and the Indo-Persian Literary Realm,” 60n24, 65; and Tarzi, “*Tārīkh-i Ahmad Shahi*,” 93. On Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī’s description of Aḥmad Shāh’s domains, see Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, ed. Murādōf, 1:10b–11a.

investigation;²⁰ in fact, most informed authors writing in the first decades of the nineteenth century continued to describe the domains of the Durrānī state as Khurasan and Hindustan.²¹ For instance, in the section of his chronicle on the Afghan kings, ‘Abd al-Karīm “Bukhārī” prefaces his description of the Durrānī territories by stating: “The names of the provinces controlled by the Afghan monarch, i.e., those among the lands of Hindustan and Khurasan, are as follows...”²² Likewise, authors writing in Central Asia and India at the time consistently described the realms of the Durrānī state by using identical terms.²³ These and many other sources suggest that “Afghanistan” was not a widely used geographic term historically, either within or beyond the territory encompassing present-day Afghanistan.

The strong emphasis on the Abdālī-Durrānī association with the label “Afghanistan,” with all its historical ambiguities, also tends to obfuscate the considerable degree to which

²⁰ As with Khurasan and Hindustan, “Turkistan” is a territorial term frequently encountered in Persian historiography where its meaning varies according to time and place. In early Durrānī sources like the *TASH*, the term “Turkistan” was often used to denote Transoxania as well as the Durrānī territories south of the Amū Daryā or Oxus River, i.e., the cis-Oxus region; see McChesney, *Waqf in Central Asia*, 215, 220–22; Lee, *The ‘Ancient Supremacy’*, xxxi–xxxiv, 80n; and Gommans, *The Rise of the Indo-Afghan Empire*, 61–62.

²¹ Other local geographic terms like Wilāyat, Rōh, and Kasēghar that are used in Afghan sources are discussed in subsequent chapters of this dissertation.

²² See ‘Abd al-Karīm “Bukhārī,” *Histoire de l’Asie Centrale (Afghanistan, Boukhara, Khiva, Khoqand) depuis les dernières années du règne de Nadir Chah (1153), jusqu’en 1233 de l’Hégire (1740–1818)*, ed. and trans. Charles Schefer, 2 vols. (Paris, 1876), 2:4–5.

²³ For example, the *Firdaws al-iqbāl*, a nineteenth-century chronicle on the history of Khorezm, describes the neighbouring lands of the Durrānī kings as constituting Khurasan and India; see Shēr Muḥammad Mīrāb Mūnis and Muḥammad Rizā Mīrāb Āghā, *Firdaws al-iqbāl: History of Khorezm*, trans. Yuri Bregel (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 157. As Mīr Ghulām Muḥammad Ghubār noted, various other nineteenth-century chronicles, such as the *Ẓafar-nāma* dedicated to the Sikh ruler, Ranjīt Singh, identifies the Durrānī and their habitation with “Khurasan”; see Mīr Ghulām Muḥammad Ghubār, *Khurasan* (Kabul: Maṭba‘a-i ‘Umūmī, 1326 H.sh./1947), 37–42; and Amara Nātha, *Ẓafar-nāma-i Ranjīt Singhah*, ed. Sita Ram Kohli (Lahore: Maktab-i Maḥmūdiyya, 1928), 3. Despite his reservations about the term, the colonial author Mountstuart Elphinstone acknowledges that “Khorassan” was the most commonly used name among the country’s inhabitants; see Mountstuart Elphinstone, *An Account of the Kingdom of Caubul, and Its Dependencies in Persia, Tartary, and India: Comprising a View of the Afghaun Nation, and a History of the Dooraunee Monarchy* (London, 1815), 151–52; also see Parvanta, “Afghanistan – Land of the Afghans?” 18.

the confederacy was influenced by, and exerted influence upon, the peoples and cultures of neighbouring countries. This inter-connectedness is reflected in the cosmopolitan culture of the trans-regional Durrānī polity which, due to its stability and increasing prosperity, attracted bureaucrats, soldiers, poets, religious figures, and merchants of various tribal and ethno-linguistic affiliations from across Central Asia, Iran, India and other lands that lie well beyond the borders of either the historical “Afghanistan” or its contemporary namesake.

Given the unsuitability of the geographic term Afghanistan, I have instead opted for “Indo-Khurasan” in this dissertation. This term was used by Joseph T. Arlinghaus at the suggestion of Iqtidar Husain Siddiqui, historian of the Indo-Afghan Lōdī (855–932/1451–1526) and Sūrī (947–62/1540–56) dynasties, to refer to the mountainous region located south of the Hindu Kush and west of the Indus River that encompasses much of present-day southeastern Afghanistan and northwestern Pakistan.²⁴ For the purposes of this study, the term Indo-Khurasan has been broadened to include the territories inhabited and later ruled by the Abdālī-Durrānī in the period under investigation. To borrow ‘Abd al-Karīm’s nomenclature, these territories include the “Hindustani” provinces of Kabul, Peshawar, Kashmir, and the Punjab as well as the “Khurasani” provinces of Mashhad, Herat, Farāh, and Qandahar. I would argue that the term Indo-Khurasan is more appropriate for analytical purposes since it evokes the close historical ties of the Abdālī-Durrānī to Khurasan, India, and the lands in between. Indo-Khurasan also accurately reflects the geographic lexicon found in contemporary sources where the terms Khurasan and Hindustan (or its variant, Hind) are prevalent; Indo-Khurasan thus combines two geographic terms frequently used by

²⁴ For a working definition of Indo-Khurasan, see Joseph T. Arlinghaus, “The Transformation of Afghan Tribal Society: Tribal Expansion, Mughal Imperialism and the Roshaniyya Insurrection” (PhD diss., Duke University, 1988), 4–10. A useful description of the ecological setting of the Afghans, i.e., the “Afghan Homeland,” is also given in Jon Wilson Anderson, “Doing Pakhtu: Social Organization of the Ghilzai Pakhtun,” (PhD diss., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1979), 13–15, 20–24.

contemporary authors when referring to the frontier region straddling Iran, India, and Central Asia where the Abdālī-Durrānī were active throughout the early-modern era.

I.5: Note on the Use of the Term “Afghan”

Like “Afghanistan,” the term “Afghan” has taken on different meanings at different points in history. Early variants of the name are allegedly mentioned in ancient Indian and Chinese sources from the pre-Islamic era.²⁵ The more common Arabo-Persian form *Afghān* is sporadically mentioned in Islamic-era writings from the tenth century onward. But it was not until the early Mughal period that the most comprehensive and influential histories of the Afghans were first written. Sources composed between the formation of the Mughal and Durrānī polities indicate that the term “Afghan” was used primarily to denote the Pashtuns, i.e., those tribesmen who spoke Pashto (often called *Afghānī*) as their native tongue and who claimed descent from a common Pashtun ancestor.²⁶

²⁵ *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., s.v. “Afghān” (by G. Morgenstierne); and M. Hassan Kakar, *A Political and Diplomatic History of Afghanistan, 1863–1901* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 1–3n.

²⁶ Although the Pashtuns widely self-identify as “Pashtun” (as well as Pakhtun, or any of the variants of these terms), they are more frequently referred to in Islamicate primary sources as “Afghan.” In addition, the term “Pathān” is often used alongside “Afghān” (and its variant “Awghān”) in Indo-Persian sources to denote the Pashtuns. The varied uses are succinctly summarized in the *Ātishkada-i Āzar* of the mid-eighteenth century Iranian author, Luṭf ‘Alī Āzar Bēgdilī, who, based on the information of his informants with knowledge about the topic, writes that the Afghans are known as “Pātān” in Hindustan; are referred to in Iran as “Awghān” (read: Avghān?), which is Arabized as “Afghān”; and self-identify as “Pashtān”; see Luṭf ‘Alī Āzar Bēgdilī, *Ātishkada-i Āzar*, vol. 4., ed. Mīr Hāshim Muḥaddis̄ (Tehran: Amīr Kabīr, 1378 H.sh/1999), 4:461. For useful analyses on the relationship between the terms Afghan, Pathan, and Pashtun, see Anderson, “Doing Pakhtu,” 13–18, 24–33 passim; Arlinghaus, “The Transformation of Afghan Tribal Society,” 12n14; and Shah Mahmoud Hanifi, *Connecting Histories in Afghanistan: Market Relations and State Formation on a Colonial Frontier* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008), 24–33.

What complicates matters is that the term “Afghan” is currently used for any and all citizens of Afghanistan—a considerable proportion of whom are non-Pashtuns.²⁷ This development may be attributed largely to the ambitious efforts of nationalists in contemporary Afghanistan to re-imagine the country’s diverse groups as members of a single “Afghan” nation irrespective of their ethno-linguistic affiliations.²⁸ As a result of this broader application of “Afghan,” the distinction between the term’s pre-modern and modern uses and meanings has been blurred. The indiscriminate use of the term Afghan has been the source of misinformation and confusion both within and beyond Afghanistan and, unfortunately, remains pervasive even in the scholarly literature.

As this dissertation relies heavily on primary sources composed in the pre-modern (and thus pre-nationalist) era, unless otherwise stated, it adheres to the use of the term “Afghan” in its more limited sense to denote the Pashtuns—defined herein as native-speakers of Pashto who claimed descent from a common Pashtun ancestor. I do so while recognizing that the Afghan=Pashtun equation is contingent historically; that the meaning of “Afghan” varies according to time and place; and that the label “Afghan” may also in some cases have been applied as a blanket term to some non-Pashto speaking groups.²⁹ Nevertheless, within the period under investigation, it is evident that the Pashtuns, Abdālī-

²⁷ Afghanistan’s population figures vary according to the source(s) consulted. But it should be noted that despite recent efforts no comprehensive, scientific national census has been conducted in Afghanistan and so these figures are at best tentative estimates. For more on this topic, *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. “Census ii. In Afghanistan” (by Danial Balland); *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. “Demography ii. In Afghanistan” (by Danial Balland); also see Shah Mahmoud Hanifi, “Quandaries of the Afghan Nation,” in *Under the Drones: Modern Lives in the Afghanistan-Pakistan Borderlands*, ed. Shahzad Bashir and Robert D. Crews (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), 85n1.

²⁸ For an analysis of the nationalist project in Afghanistan, as well as some of its problematic and contradictory features, see Wali Ahmadi, *Modern Persian Literature in Afghanistan: Anomalous Visions of History and Form* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 41–44; and Parvanta, “Afghanistan – Land of the Afghans?” 17–25.

²⁹ On the use of “Afghan” as a blanket term, see Willem Vogelsang, “The Ethnogenesis of the Pashtuns,” in *Cairo to Kabul: Afghan and Islamic Studies*, ed. Warwick Ball and Leonard Harrow (London: Melisende, 2002), 230–31.

Durrānī included, constituted the main ethno-linguistic community who either claimed or were widely attributed an Afghan identity.

I.6: Note on Ethnographic Terms

An ethnographic term found throughout this dissertation is “tribe.” This term requires some explanation because of its frequent use in this study and because, in the words of Richard Tapper, “The notion of ‘tribe’ is notoriously vague.”³⁰ Indeed, there is a great deal of literature dedicated to explaining this vague notion and its significance. Here I do not propose to resolve the notorious ambiguities alluded to. Rather my more modest aim is to outline, in a suggestive rather than conclusive way, the uses of ‘tribe’ and various related terms (confederacy, clan, lineage, etc.) in this dissertation, particularly in reference to the Abdālī-Durrānī. This analysis is largely historical in that it is based on my reading of primary source texts on the Abdālī-Durrānī,³¹ though it is informed by ethnographic treatments by contemporary anthropologists of tribal groups active in Indo-Khurasan, including the Afghans (but not necessarily the Abdālī-Durrānī).³²

³⁰ Richard Tapper, “Introduction,” in *The Conflict of Tribe and State in Iran and Afghanistan*, ed. Richard Tapper (London: Croom Helm, 1983), 1–82; *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. “Confederations, Tribal” (by Richard Tapper); Richard Tapper, “Tribe and State in Iran and Afghanistan: An Update,” *Études Rurales* 184 (2009): 31–46. By ethnography I refer to what Tapper describes as “a series of research practices formulated by social and cultural anthropology”; see Richard Tapper, “What is This Thing Called ‘Ethnography’?” *Iranian Studies* 31, nos. 3–4 (1998): 389–98.

³¹ Much of the information on the Abdālī-Durrānī up to and including the reign of Aḥmad Shāh rule is derived from sources like *TASH*, *SSA*, and *TMA* that were commissioned and/or composed by individuals who claimed Abdālī-Durrānī affiliation. Further details on these sources are provided in §1.1.1 and §1.2.1.

³² As Jon W. Anderson once noted, “A more thorough ethnographic depiction of the Durrani would require information about local organization, land tenure, and succession that is not presently available.” See Anderson, “Doing Pakhtu,” 58. The situation has improved since the time of Anderson’s writing (see especially the studies of Nancy Tapper and Bernt Glatzer), though the ethnographic data on the Durrānī residing in Qandahar is lacking.

Many historians and anthropologists have understood “tribe” in a broad sense to denote social groups subscribing to what Richard Tapper describes as “an ideology of common descent.”³³ As several sources indicate, such an ideology is present among the Abdālī-Durrānī, who, according to genealogical tradition, claim to descend from Abdāl, the putative eponymous founder of the Abdālī confederacy. This Abdāl is purported to be a descendant of Qays, the putative ancestor of all Afghans-Pashtuns.³⁴

The primary sources readily attest to the presence of a descent ideology among the Abdālī-Durrānī, though they present challenges for readers attempting to utilize them to represent the organization of the “tribe” in a cogent manner. One such challenge is the diverse set of terms used to describe the social and political organization of the Abdālī-Durrānī. With respect to etymology, sources describing Afghan tribes like the Abdālī-Durrānī use a wide variety of words of Turko-Mongolian, Arabic, and Persian origin, many of which have been adopted into Pashto. Examples include the Turko-Mongolian terms *īl*³⁵ (pl. *īlāt*), *ulūs*³⁶ (pl. *ulūsāt*) and *ūymāq*;³⁷ the Arabic terms *ahl*, *āl*, *‘ashīra* (pl. *‘ashāyir/‘ashā’ir*), *firqa*

³³ Richard Tapper, “Introduction,” 65. As Richard Tapper has noted, common descent is neither the only nor a universal criterion for determining what a tribe is. E.g., there exist larger tribal groups lacking a descent ideology but who are considered “tribes” based on other criteria, including occupying contiguous territory and being led by a chief. See Tapper, “Tribe and State in Iran and Afghanistan,” 34n1. With respect to the Afghan context, as Anderson notes, there is a distinctly performative element (i.e., “doing Pakhtu”) that is central to the construction of identity among certain Pashtun groups like the Ghilzay; see Anderson, “Doing Pakhtu,” 37–38n1; *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. “Gīlzi” (by M. Jamil Hanifi).

³⁴ This view is complicated by the fact that Aḥmad Shāh renamed the Abdālī “Durrānī,” not after an ancestor named “Durrān” but based on his royal epithet, Durr-i Durrān. Aḥmad Shāh’s efforts to reconfigure the structure of the Abdālī confederacy in his own image are treated in Chapter 6.

³⁵ In his Turki-Persian dictionary *Sanglākh*, Mahdī Khān Astarābādī, the Turkic word *īl* is identified with the Persian terms *ahl*, *khalq*, and *gurūh*, which may be translated as “family,” “peoples,” or “group”; see Mahdī Khān, *Sanglākh: Farhang-i Turkī bi Fārsī az sadda-i dawāzdahum hijrī*, ed. Rōshan Khiyāwī (Tehran: Nashr-i Markaz, 1374 H.sh./1995), 67.

³⁶ As Gerhard Doerfer indicates, the term *ulūs* has multiple meanings and connotations in Turkish and Mongolian, though it is often used in reference to tribes and tribal peoples, often larger in size. This view was shared by Raverty, who defined *ulūs* as “A large family, a clan, a tribe, a sept.” See Gerhard Doerfer, *Türkische*

(pl. *firaq*), *khayl* (Pashto: *khēl*), *qawm* (pl. *aqwām*), *qabīla* (pl. *qabāyil/qabā'il*), and *ṭāyifa/ṭā'ifa* (pl. *ṭawāyif/ṭawā'if*); the Persian terms *shākha* and *tīra*; et al.

Not only are terms used to describe the Abdālī-Durrānī diverse in etymology, the sources typically neglect to make a clear distinction between them suggesting that they are not used in any systematic or technical sense.³⁸ For instance, in sources from the pre- and early-Durrānī era, the term *īl* is used to refer to the Abdālī-Durrānī in particular, as in *īl-i Abdālī* and *īl-i jalīl-i Durrānī* (i.e., the “exalted Durrānī *īl*”),³⁹ as well as the Afghans as a whole, as in the phrase *īl-i jalīl-i Afghān* (i.e., “exalted Afghan *īl*”).⁴⁰ A cognate that is often found in conjunction with *īl* is *ulūs/ülūs*, as in *ülūs-i Abdālī* or *ülūs-i Afghān*.⁴¹ Yet another term, *ṭāyifa*, is

und Mongolische Elemente im Neupersischen: Unter Besonderer Berücksichtigung älterer neupersischer Geschichtsquellen, vor allem der Mongolen- und Timuridenzeit, 4 vols. (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1963–75), 1:175–78; Henry George Raverty, *A Dictionary of the Puk'hto, Pus'hto, or the Language of the Afghāns; With Remarks on the Originality of the Language, and Its Affinity to the Semitic and Other Oriental Tongues, etc. etc.* (London, 1860), 45. In his description of Afghan social organization, Anderson refers to *ülūs* as a “tribal segment.” He also notes that the term *ülūs*, which in Pashto is also pronounced *wulūs/wulus*, as in “*wulus-wālī*,” is applied to civil divisions of provinces in contemporary Afghanistan; see Anderson, “Doing Pakhtu,” 16–17.

³⁷ The Turko-Mongolian term *ūymāq* is often found in relation to tribes active in and around Indo-Khurasan. In the *Sanglākh*, the word *ūymāq* is described as the equivalent of the Arabic term *qabīla*; Mahdī Khān, *Sanglākh*, 56; also see Doerfer, *Türkische und Mongolische Elemente im Neupersischen*, 1:182–86. For tribal groups in Afghanistan that are known by the *ūymāq* label, see *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. “Aymāq” (by A. Janata).

³⁸ See Abū al-Faẓl's description of the Afghan tribes in the *Ā'in-i Akbarī* using the terms *ulūs*, *ūymāq*, *ṭāyifa*, and *qawm* in Abū al-Faẓl 'Allāmī, *Ā'in-i Akbarī*, ed. Henry Blochmann, 2 vols. in 1 (Calcutta, 1867–77), 1/2:589. Such ambiguity is far from exceptional within and beyond Afghan contexts. As Robert D. McChesney has noted, in sources describing tribal organizations in early modern Uzbek political settings, the terms *qawm*, *ṭāyifa*, *qabīla*, and others are used for tribal groups but “with no indication that the terms are distinct or technical”; see McChesney, *Waqf in Central Asia*, 57.

³⁹ For references to the *īl-i Abdālī* and *īl-i Durrānī*, see Mīrzā 'Alī Naqī Naṣīrī, *Alqāb wa mawājib dawra-i salāṭīn-i Ṣafawiyya*, ed. Yūsuf Raḥīmīlū (Mashhad: Dānishgāh-i Firdawsī, 1371 H.sh./1993–94), 72; Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, ed. Murādōf, 1:11b. A nearly identical formula is used for other groups described in the Persian historiography of the early modern period. On the *īl-i jalīl-i Turkman*, e.g., see Tucker, *Nadir Shah's Quest for Legitimacy*, 2, 7–14 passim.

⁴⁰ Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, ed. Murādōf, 1:100b.

⁴¹ See note 37 above for a reference to the *ülūs-i Abdālī* in the *Ā'in-i Akbarī*. For examples of the use of *ülūs* in the TASH, see Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, ed. Murādōf, 1:41b, 1:100b, 2:536a. The terms *īl* and *ülūs* are

also used in a sense very similar to both *īl* and *ulūs*, as in *ṭāyifa-i jalīla-i Abdālī* (i.e., “exalted Abdālī *ṭāyifa*”) and *ṭāyifa-i jalīla-i Afghān* (i.e., “exalted Afghan *ṭāyifa*”).⁴² Although in these instances the terms *īl*, *ulūs*, and *ṭāyifa* are used in a broad sense to denote larger tribal groups such as the Abdālī-Durrānī or the Afghans generally, this usage is far from consistent and the terms can in some case refer to smaller tribal groups. As an example, in one passage of the *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, we read that Aḥmad Shāh belonged to the “*tīra-i Sadōzay*” (i.e., “Sadōzay segment”) of the Durrānī *īl*, yet in another passage of the same work we read of the *ṭāyifa-i jalīla-i Sadōzay* (i.e., the “exalted Sadōzay *ṭāyifa*”).⁴³

In addition to the foregoing terms, the sources often include names of individuals and groups with the Pashto suffix *-zay*, meaning “son of,” and the “hyphenated” term *khēl*.⁴⁴ As is the case with the terms *īl*, *ulūs*, and *ṭāyifa*, clear distinctions cannot always be discerned between *-zays* and *khēls*. Several anthropologists describe *-zays* and *khēls* as local tribal “segments” or “patrilineages,” with the patrilineal descendants of these segments constituting a *qawm*. Likewise, in the Abdālī-Durrānī context, *-zay* and *khēl* both refer to segments or patrilineages of varying sizes, with each patrilineage taking the name of its eponymous ancestor. Many of the *-zays* that comprise larger tribal segments, or what the anthropologist Jon W. Anderson terms “maximal lineages,” which can continuously segment into smaller units or “minimal lineages” called *-zays*.⁴⁵ To give an example from the Abdālī-

often found in conjunction when referring to Afghan tribal groups like the Abdālī-Durrānī. For examples, see *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī*, MS, British Library, Or. 1877, fols. 8b, 11b, 14b.

⁴² *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī*, fols. 32b, 37b, 47a.

⁴³ Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, ed. Murādōf, 2:595a.

⁴⁴ The suffix *-zay* (plural *-zī*) is derived from Pashto *zōy*, meaning “son”; see Raverty, *A Dictionary of the Puk’hto*, 530, 548–49.

⁴⁵ See Anderson, “Doing Pakhtu,” 17, 40, 212–16; Jon W. Anderson, “Khan and Khel: Dialectics of Pakhtun Tribalism,” in *The Conflict of Tribe and State in Iran and Afghanistan*, ed. Richard Tapper (London: Croom Helm,

Durrānī context, consider the Durrānī *amīr* ‘Abd Allāh Khān, who is at times mentioned alongside his tribal names “Ayyūbzay” and “Pōpalzay”; on their own, these tribal names are difficult to interpret, but with the help of Abdālī-Durrānī genealogies (see Appendix 1), we see that Ayyūb was a descendant of Pōpal, a lineal descendant of Abdāl, the putative eponymous founder of the Abdālī confederacy. To further illustrate this point, we may refer to another prominent Durrānī *amīr*, Shāh Walī Khān, who is associated with the tribal names “Šāliḥzay,” “Bāmīzay,” and “Pōpalzay.” Again, with the help of Abdālī-Durrānī genealogies, we can deduce that these tribal names indicate that Šāliḥ was a descendant of Bāmī, who was a descendant of the Pōpal mentioned earlier.

The foregoing examples indicate that a patrilineage, or -zay, may segment into multiple patrilineages, or -zays. But in certain instances -zays also segment into *khēls*. This is the case with Aḥmad Shāh who, like his *amīrs*, was a descendant of Pōpal, though his ancestry (*nasab*) is traced through a figure named Khwāja Khiḥr to Sadō, whom the genealogies suggest was a brother of the aforesaid Šāliḥ.⁴⁶ What is noteworthy is that the Sadōzay patrilineage to which Aḥmad Shāh belonged is segmented into *khēls*—namely, the Mawdūd Khēl, Bahādur Khēl, Kāmṛān Khēl, Ṣa‘farān Khēl, and Khwāja Khiḥr Khēl—rather than -zays. The Sadōzay example shows that the terms -zay and *khēl* are not mutually exclusive but can coexist within a single descent group. However, it is unclear why the five sons attributed to Sadō are associated with the label *khēl* but not -zay, as is the case with

1983), 123–31, 134; also see Fredrik Barth, *Political Leadership among the Swat Pathans* (London: Athlone, 1959), 13–30 *passim*.

⁴⁶ An exception is the TMA, which suggests that Sadō was not the brother but the son of Šāliḥ; see Appendix 1, Genealogical Table 3.

Pōpal, Alakō, Bārak, and others.⁴⁷ Nor is it clear why some groups affiliated with the Abdālī-Durrānī do not possess either of the names *-zay* or *khēl*, as in the Khugiyānī and Mākū.⁴⁸

Given the inconsistencies and idiosyncrasies surrounding the “ethnographic” terminology used in the primary sources to describe the organization of the Abdālī-Durrānī, a brief outline of how these terms are understood and deployed in this dissertation is in order. To summarize, the above examples involving the terms *īl* and *ulūs* indicate that both are generally applied to larger tribal groups such as the Abdālī-Durrānī or the Afghans as a whole. To reflect this broader connotation while at the same time maintaining a distinction between the terms, *īl* is translated as “people” and *ulūs* as “tribal confederacy” or simply “confederacy.”⁴⁹ The terms *‘ashīra*, *qawm*, *qabīla*, *ṭāyifa*, et al. have, consistent with their generic uses in the primary sources, been translated as “tribe,” which is understood in a broad sense to denote descent groups of any size. But in exceptional cases where these terms are applied to identifiably smaller groups (as in the Sadōzay *ṭāyifa*), the term “clan” is employed instead. The Abdālī-Durrānī confederacy was organized along segmentary lines, with larger segments forming what may be termed maximal lineages, and smaller segments forming minimal lineages.⁵⁰ In accordance with its generic usage in the primary sources, the term *-zay*, which is applied to both maximal and minimal lineages, has also been termed “clan.” In cases where one *-zay* segments into one or more other *-zays*, I have referred to the

⁴⁷ Anderson “Doing Pakhtu,” 215 points out that one of the distinctions between the Durrānī and Ghilzai is that the term *-zay* is more often applied to “the upper reaches of segmentation among Ghilzai” whereas among the Durrānī it is applied to “most groupings down to the minimal.”

⁴⁸ On the imprecise lineages of the Khugiyānī and Mākū in the genealogical tradition of the Abdālī-Durrānī, see *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. “Dorrānī” (by Daniel Balland).

⁴⁹ In this specific regard, I follow Richard Tapper’s lead in referring to such larger organizations as “confederacies”; see Richard Tapper, “Tribe and State in Afghanistan,” 35.

⁵⁰ On the segmentary lineage system, see Marshall D. Sahlins, “The Segmentary Lineage: An Organization of Predatory Expansion,” *American Anthropologist* 63 (1961): 322–45.

latter as “sub-clan(s)”; for instance, the Sadōzay and Bāmīzay are sub-clans of Pōpalzay clan. “Clan” is also applied to groups like the Khugiyānī, Mākū, and others that lack the suffix -zay but that, according to genealogical tradition, are in the upper reaches of segmentation of the Abdālī-Durrānī confederacy. Patrilineages functioning at lower levels of segmentation that are associated with *khēl* have been termed “lineage” (as in the Khwāja Khiṣr lineage of the Sadōzay sub-clan of the Pōpalzay clan). Together, these various clans, sub-clans, and lineages comprise the Abdālī-cum-Durrānī tribal confederacy.

The above outline is a preliminary attempt at understanding the terminology used to represent the organization of the Abdālī-Durrānī confederacy in and around the reign of Aḥmad Shāh. It should be noted that this outline does not necessarily or neatly correlate to Afghan-Pashtun groups other than the Abdālī-Durrānī.⁵¹ It should also be added that, rather than representing the Abdālī confederacy as it always was, these ethnographic terms refer a fluid rather than a static organization. To illustrate this fluidity, we may refer to the oft-cited example of the Achakzay, purported to have been a sub-clan of the Bārakzay before being recognized by Aḥmad Shāh as an independent clan as a way to weaken the Bārakzay clan. The Achakzay case exemplifies an ongoing process of fusion and fissure within the confederacy that, although poorly documented and understood, seems to have been unfolding over centuries.⁵² In short, this study presents a snapshot of the complex social and political structure of the Abdālī-Durrānī confederacy within the period under investigation that does not necessarily mirror its organization in preceding and proceeding eras.

⁵¹ Indeed, as Richard Tapper notes, tribal groups in Afghanistan do not conform to a single pattern; see Richard Tapper, “Tribe and State in Afghanistan,” 35.

⁵² Some examples of traditionally non-Abdālī individuals and groups having become affiliated with Durrānī label under Aḥmad Shāh are given in Chapter 6 (§6.5).

Chapter 1: Primary Sources for the Study of the Abdālī-Durrānī

The lack of scholarly analysis of the history of the Abdālī-Durrānī tribal confederacy to which Aḥmad Shāh and his successors belonged belies the wealth of primary source materials available to researchers on the subject. The bulk of the primary sources utilized in this dissertation consist of documents written in Persian, though some are also composed in various South Asian and European languages. These sources belong to a range of types and genres, including court chronicles, local histories, genealogical tracts, poetry, diplomatic correspondences, royal decrees, etc. Many have been published especially within the last century or so, though several remain in manuscript form. The focus of the analysis below is on the main primary sources that were available to me in the course of research. However, it should be noted that the documents described herein represent part of a larger assortment of primary sources—whether known or yet to be discovered—relevant to the study of Abdālī-Durrānī history.¹

When examining such a broad array of materials, the historian is confronted with the task of sifting through the multiplicity of sources to determine their relative historical value. In an effort to address this matter as it relates to the study of the Abdālī-Durrānī and Aḥmad Shāh, this chapter provides an overview and assessment of the principal primary sources to be utilized in this project. In terms of organization, the sources are divided into two sections: Section 1.1 consists of sources on the history of the Abdālī prior to the rise of the Durrānī polity, i.e., the “pre-Durrānī era”; while section 1.2 consists of sources on the

¹ The studies on the primary sources from the early Durrānī period on which the present chapter builds include Mann, “Quellenstudien zur Geschichte des Aḥmed Šāh Durrānī,” 97–118, 161–72, 323–58; C. A. Storey, *Persian Literature: A Bio-Bibliographical Survey*, 2 vols. (London: Luzac, 1927–39), 1:322–25, 1:393–407; Ch. A. Stori [C. A. Storey], *Persidskaia literatura: Bio-bibliograficheskii obzor*, trans. and rev. Iu. E. Bregel, 3 vols. (Moscow: Glavnaia redaktsiia vostochnoi literatury, 1972), 2:905–17, 2:1209–46; Singh, *Ahmad Shah Durrani*, 415–24; and *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. “Historiography xi. Afghanistan” (by Christine Noelle-Karimi).

career of Aḥmad Shāh and the Durrānī polity. In each section, an attempt has been made to arrange the sources thematically and in rough chronological order.

1.1: Overview of Sources on the Pre-Durrānī Era

Information on Abdālī history is far from abundant, especially in sources composed in the pre-Durrānī era. But there are two broad categories of sources that provide details on the pre-Durrānī history of the Abdālī. The first are the historical writings on the Afghans that became popular especially among the Afghan diaspora in India in the early Mughal period. The second are chronicles produced within Mughal, Safavid, and post-Safavid milieus, especially in and around the lands of Iran, India, and Indo-Khurasan over which the Abdālī asserted their political authority in the eighteenth century.

Of the two categories, by far the more detailed are the first, that is, the Afghan genealogical histories which incorporate the myths, legends, and histories of the Afghans in general and of individual tribal groups like the Abdālī in particular. The Abdālī genealogical histories were written after the accession of Aḥmad Shāh and are thus retrospective and often ahistorical. However, they appear to be based, at least in part, on oral traditions dating to the pre-Durrānī period and thus preserve information on this crucial period of Abdālī history that is in many cases not found in any other sources. While court chronicles and other documents from the Mughal, Safavid, and post-Safavid periods offer less detailed accounts of the Abdālī, the data found in them is useful for correcting, corroborating, and/or supplementing the information in the Afghan genealogical histories.

1.1.1: Afghan Genealogical Histories

Beginning in early seventeenth-century Mughal India, there was a steady growth of works written on the history of the various Afghan-Pashtun tribes, including the Abdālī. While many of these works were written in Persian and adhered to long-established models of Arabic and Persian annalist history (*tārīkh*), their authors also relied largely on ethnographic data (e.g. oral tradition, myth, and folklore) current among the Afghans in the seventeenth century to construct narratives about various topics, including the mythical origins, legends, and genealogy of the Afghans as well as the deeds of their holy figures. But while these works do not fit neatly within conventional literary genres, I have referred to them as genealogical histories because this term more accurately reflects their focus on the question of Afghan genealogy and history.²

These genealogical histories offer valuable insights into how Afghans represented their history in the early modern period. But, over the years, scholars have commented on the inauthenticity of these works, especially with respect to their romantic and idealistic representations of the remote Afghan past. In some cases, however, the genealogical and historical data they supply for the period in and around which they were produced is corroborated by outside sources and is thus more reliable. Moreover, despite the various problems posed by these genealogical histories, some of which will be discussed in Chapter 2, they often represent the most comprehensive sources available for the history of the Abdālī in the period leading up to the formation of the Durrānī polity. The data they contain thus contribute significantly to our understanding of the context surrounding the rise and rule of Aḥmad Shāh.

² For Nile Green's description of these works as "ethnohistories," see Nile Green, "Tribe, Diaspora, and Sainthood in Afghan History," *Journal of Asian Studies* 67, no. 1 (2008): 183–87; and Nile Green, "Idiom, Genre, and the Politics of Self-Description on the Peripheries of Persian," in *Religion, Language, and Power: An Introductory Essay*, ed. Nile Green and Mary Searle-Chatterjee (New York: Routledge, 2008), 206–9.

Two broadly defined categories of genealogical histories will be drawn upon in this thesis for details about Abdālī history. The first consists of works such as the *Tārīkh-i Khān Jahānī wa makhzan-i Afghānī* that are not dedicated specifically to the Abdālī but that contain important, if brief, accounts of the confederacy's past. The second consists of later sources such as *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* and the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ʿālī-shān az awlād-i Sadō mīr-i Afghān* that are modeled on earlier genealogical histories but that are dedicated specifically to the Abdālī. The Abdālī genealogical histories are among the handful of works to offer grand-narratives of the confederacy's history from its mythical origins down the period in which they were put to writing.

Tārīkh-i Khān Jahānī wa makhzan-i Afghānī by Khwāja Niʿmat Allāh Harawī

The *Tārīkh-i Khān Jahānī wa makhzan-i Afghānī* (The history of Khān Jahān and the Afghan treasury) (henceforth *Tārīkh-i Khān Jahānī*; *TKhJ* in notes) is an elaborate genealogical history of the Afghans written in Persian by Khwāja Niʿmat Allāh ibn Ḥabīb Allāh Harawī.³ Among the few details known about the author is that his father Ḥabīb Allāh was a native of Herat who found employment at the Mughal court during the reign of Akbar (r. 963–1014/1556–1605). Niʿmat Allāh himself began his career as a librarian of the Mughal *amīr* ʿAbd al-Raḥīm Khān-i Khānān (d. 1036/1626) prior to becoming a professional chronicler (*wāqiʿa nawīs*) for the emperor Jahāngīr (r. 1013–37/1605–27). He was dismissed from this post in 1017/1608–9 for unknown reasons and thereafter entered the service of Khān Jahān Lōdī (d. 1040/1631), an influential Afghan *amīr* whom Jahāngīr had appointed as governor of the Deccan. Khān Jahān subsequently commissioned Niʿmat Allāh to write a comprehensive

³ In addition to being known by the title *Makhzan-i Afghānī*, later authors also knew the *TKhJ* as *Kitāb-i Mirʾāt-i Afghānī* or *Mirʾāt al-Afghānī*. For a detailed description of a manuscript bearing this alternate title in the Tajikistan Academy of Sciences, see A. M. Mirzoev et al., *Katalog vostochnykh rukopisei Akademii nauk Tadzhikskoi SSR*, 6 vols. (Dushanbe: "Donish," 1960), 1:151–53.

history of the Afghans. The final product, the *Tārīkh-i Khān Jahānī*, is often attributed exclusively to Ni‘mat Allāh. But as several scholars have noted, the work is, in fact, more of a collaborative work since we are told that Haybat Khān Kākar, one of Khān Jahān’s attendants, aided Ni‘mat Allāh by gathering data for the project. The history was completed between the years 1020/1612 and 1021/1613, though amendments were apparently made to it as late as 1024/1615. Nothing is known of Ni‘mat Allāh’s fate following this last date.⁴

The following is a summary of the contents of Imamuddin’s edition of the *Tārīkh-i Khān Jahānī*: The Introduction (*muqaddima*), chapter one, and chapter two narrate the history of the Afghans from their pre-Islamic origins to the beginning of the Lōdī dynasty (est. 855/1451). The section on the origins of the Afghans includes legendary accounts of the Biblical and Quranic figures Jacob (Ya‘qūb) and Saul (Ṭālūt), both of whom are depicted as the ancestors of Qays ‘Abd al-Rashīd, the putative ancestor of the Afghans. Chapters three and four are dedicated to the Lōdī and Sūrī dynasties, respectively. Chapter five is dedicated to the career of Khān Jahān Lōdī. Chapter six outlines the genealogy of the Afghans by providing details about Qays ‘Abd al-Rashīd’s sons Sarban, Batan, and Gharghusht—the patriarchs of the three main Afghan tribal divisions. Chapter Seven covers the career of the Mughal emperor Jahāngīr. The conclusion (*khātima*) was written as a commemoration to a number of revered Afghan saints.

As the summary above shows, the *Tārīkh-i Khān Jahānī* comprises a diversity of contents that do not fit neatly within a particular genre. This thesis is concerned primarily with those sections of the work that deal with the ethnogenesis (chapters one and two) and genealogy (chapter six) of the Afghan peoples. The chapter on Afghan genealogy is

⁴ Additional details on the *TKhJ* and its author are available in Storey, *Persian Literature*, 1:393; Stori, *Persidskaia literatura*, trans. and rev. Bregel, 2:1209–12; and Ni‘mat Allāh ibn Ḥabīb Allāh Harawī, *Tārīkh-i Khān Jahānī wa makhzan-i Afghānī*, ed. S.M. Imamuddin, 2 vols. (Dacca: Asiatic Society of Pakistan, 1960–62), 1:20–23.

particularly relevant since it contains among the earliest explicit references to Awdāl [Abdāl] b. Tarīn, the putative eponymous founder of the Abdālī-Afghan confederacy, and his progeny.⁵ Elements of the sections on ethnogenesis and genealogy were incorporated into many later Afghan histories, including those devoted specifically to the Abdālī (discussed below).⁶ It is worth adding that while later Abdālī genealogical histories were modeled in part on the *Tārīkh-i Khān Jahānī*, they were not mere replications, for their authors revised, adapted, and added to the work. In this sense, the *Tārīkh-i Khān Jahānī* supplied a narrative framework within which several later authors constructed their accounts of the Abdālī past.

A critical edition of the *Tārīkh-i Khān Jahānī* is available to researchers, as are a few partial translations of the work. Bernhard Dorn wrote what was initially thought to be a translation of Ni‘mat Allāh’s work, which was published in two volumes between 1829 and 1836.⁷ But in the preface to his study of the *Tārīkh-i Khān Jahānī*, Nirodbhusan Roy argues that what Dorn actually translated was a manuscript of the *Tawārīkh-i Majlis-ārāy* by Ibrāhīm Batanī.⁸ The confusion appears to stem from the fact that Batanī’s was also given the title *Makhzan-i Afghānī* (mistakenly, according to Roy), likely because the author borrowed extensively from Ni‘mat Allāh’s work. Roy’s study is a partial translation of the *Tārīkh-i Khān Jahānī* which focuses on the sections of Ni‘mat Allāh’s work on Lōdī rule, but also includes

⁵ Ni‘mat Allāh, *Tārīkh-i-Khān Jahānī*, 2:556, 2:562.

⁶ On the *TKhJ*’s influence on later Afghan histories written in premodern times, see Green, “Tribe, Diaspora, and Sainthood in Afghan History,” 183–85; and Green, “Idiom, Genre, and the Politics of Self-Description,” 206–9.

⁷ Bernhard Dorn, trans., *History of the Afghans: Translated from the Persian of Neamet Ullah*, 2 vols. (London, 1829–36).

⁸ Dorn, *History of the Afghans*, 1:ix–x; and Nirodbhusan Roy, trans., *Niamatullah’s History of the Afghans* (West Bengal: Santiniketan, 1958; repr., Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications, 2002), iii–v. The *TKhJ* is often conflated with the *Makhzan-i Afghānī*, though Imamuddin argues convincingly that the *Makhzan* is, in fact, a later abridgement of Ni‘mat Allāh’s history that retained only the last part of its title. For Imamuddin’s useful discussion on the distinction between the *TKhJ* and *Makhzan-i Afghānī*, along with a brief critique of the translations of Dorn and Roy, see Ni‘mat Allāh, *Tārīkh-i-Khān Jahānī*, 1:7–17.

excerpts of the other histories written about the Lōdī and Sūrī dynasties. This thesis will rely primarily on S.M. Imamuddin's critical edition of the *Tārīkh-i Khān Jahānī*, which was published in two volumes between 1960 and 1962. Though not devoid of shortcomings, this publication represents the most complete available edition of Ni'mat Allāh's work.

Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī, anonymous

The *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* (The family tree of the Abdālī Afghans) (SAA in notes) is an anonymous genealogical history written in Persian that offers a grand-narrative of Abdālī history from the time of the confederacy's putative eponymous founder Abdāl b. Tarīn down to the reign of Aḥmad Shāh. The text reads like a genealogical tract (*nasab nāma*) in that it outlines the paternal lineage of the leading or chiefly members of the Abdālī confederacy. Unlike many other genealogical tracts, however, the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* does not consist simply of a list or chart of names but includes relatively detailed accounts of the feats of individual Abdālī figures of note. The work appears to be based in part on earlier Afghan genealogical histories like the *Tārīkh-i Khān Jahānī*. But whereas the latter work only mentions Abdāl b. Tarīn and his sons, the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* continues with a more detailed account of Abdāl's descendants, who are supposed to have exercised leadership over the confederacy, down to the accession of Aḥmad Shāh. Among the topics it covers are: the rise to political prominence of the leading members of the Sadōzay clan; their dealings with other constituent clans of the Abdālī confederation and neighbouring tribal groups like the Kākars and Ghilzay; their relations with the Safavid-appointed governors-general (*bēglarbēg*) of Qandahar; and the Abdālī and Ghilzay insurrections that precipitated the dissolution of Safavid authority in Qandahar.

The British Library houses a manuscript of the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī*. The text begins on folio 2b but ends abruptly on folio 56b and is thus apparently unfinished.⁹ The fact that the British Library manuscript of the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* is unfinished raises questions about the work's intended scope. Although the British Library manuscript ends with the Abdālī and Ghilzay insurrections against the Safavids in Qandahar (early 1700s), there is reason to believe that the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī*'s author(s) planned to bring its account of events down to the reign of Aḥmad Shāh. This is, at least, the impression given by two later works based on the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī*. The first is the British colonial officer Robert Leech's "An Account of the Early Abdalees" (1845), which is an English summary translation of the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī*.¹⁰ Unlike the British Library manuscript, Leech's article includes a brief account of the Abdālī in the service of Nādir Shāh and brings the narrative of Abdālī history down to Aḥmad Shāh's reign. The second is Sulṭān Muḥammad Khān Bārakzay's *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī* (TSu in notes);¹¹ like Leech before him, Sulṭān Muḥammad relied on the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* for his account, which also describes the activities of Abdālī leaders down to Aḥmad Shāh's reign and beyond.¹²

Judging from their writings, Sulṭān Muḥammad and Leech may have consulted more complete versions of the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* that included events up to and including the accession of Aḥmad Shāh. But this is far from certain since we know that both authors also drew upon extraneous sources for data on the Abdālī. Leech, for instance, states that, in

⁹ *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī*, fols. 2a–56b. The SSA ends in the section of the text describing the activities of Mīr Ways Hōtakī (d. 1128/1715), the Ghilzay Afghan chief who is often credited with establishing independent Afghan rule in Qandahar. The career of Mīr Ways is discussed further in Chapter 5.

¹⁰ Leech, "An Account of the Early Abdalees," 445–70.

¹¹ Although the TSu was published in 1298/1881, Sulṭān Muḥammad indicates that he began working on his history in 1281/1865; see Sulṭān Muḥammad Khān Bārakzay, *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī* (Bombay, 1298/1881), 8–9.

¹² Sulṭān Muḥammad's account of the Abdālī (pp. 52–69, 97–123) is based largely on the SAA.

addition the manuscript of the above text, he also relied on his personal notes and added his own commentary to his account of Abdālī history.¹³ Sulṭān Muḥammad notes that he utilized sources other than the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* and there is indication that he made certain modifications to its account of events, too.¹⁴ Further complicating matters is that Sulṭān Muḥammad rarely specifies his sources of information in the text, making it difficult to differentiate between those parts of his account derived from *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* and those parts that were not. In short, there is reason to believe that the British Library copy of the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* was supposed to be expanded upon, though it is unclear to what extent since the manuscript is unfinished. Moreover, the fuller accounts of early Abdālī history given by Leech and especially Sulṭān Muḥammad suggest that the British Library manuscript is only one of multiple copies of the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* that were produced. The discovery of additional manuscripts of the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* may allow for a fuller assessment of its intended scope.

The British Library manuscript does not contain a definitive title. Instead, two separate titles appear in two different parts of the manuscript. The first is found scribbled on a flyleaf at the beginning of the manuscript (fol. 2a), which reads: “The name of this book is ‘The family tree and genealogy of the Afghans’” (*nām-i īn kitāb Shajara wa silsila-i Afghāniyya [ast?]*), while the second is found in what appears to be the colophon of the work (fol. 79b), which reads: “‘The Exalted Family Tree of the Afghan Peoples’ has been completed” (*tamām*

¹³ Leech writes that his account is based “partly on accounts written at my request, and from enquiries made from time to time during a continued residence of five years in Afghanistan.” See Leech, “An Account of the Early Abdalees,” 446.

¹⁴ For a reference to the sources the author utilized in his work, see Sulṭān Muḥammad, *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī*, 3–8 passim. An example of the modifications made to his account has been discussed in Chapter 2.

shud Shajara-i jalīla wa jamīla-i firqa-i Afghāniyya).¹⁵ Leech does not provide a title for the work in his summary-translation and writes that it was “a manuscript procured in Afghanistan, a second copy of which I never met with.”¹⁶ In the *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī*, Sulṭān Muḥammad refers to the work as *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* but does not indicate whether this is the title given by its original author(s).¹⁷ In the absence of an explicit authorial title, I have adopted the one used by Sulṭān Muḥammad, which, unlike the titles found in the British Library manuscript, reflects the fact that the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* is dedicated primarily to the Abdālī.¹⁸

Neither Leech nor Sulṭān Muḥammad treats the matter of the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī*’s authorship. The colophon of the British Library manuscript reads: “In accordance with the request of the Master of the Worlds and the Splendor of the Universe, Muḥammad Ṣiddīq Khān Fōfalzā’ī, I beseech the reader for supplication.”¹⁹ This statement seems to indicate that Muḥammad Ṣiddīq commissioned the copy of the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* in the British Library. Sulṭān Muḥammad states that, after exerting much effort (*ba’d az sa’y-i bisyār*) in search of sources on the Abdālī, he chanced upon a copy of the work in the

¹⁵ The end of this manuscript, i.e., after the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* and *Shajara wa silsila-i Afghāniyya* (fols. 79b–84a), includes a *du‘ā* dedicated to the Prophet Muḥammad, his family, and his companions. The final folios of the manuscript (fols. 83b–84a) include a versified prayer in Persian attributed to Khwāja Bahā’ al-Dīn Naqshband (d. 791/1389), founder of the Naqshbandī Sufi Order, which is said to have healing powers for the ill who wear the prayer around their necks (e.g., in the form of a pendant on a necklace). That a reference to Khwāja Bahā’ al-Dīn may be found in this manuscript is of little surprise, especially considering the intimate ties of the Afghans, particularly the Abdālī-Durrānī, to the Mujaddidī-Naqshbandī Order (cf. §6.4).

¹⁶ Leech, “An Account of the Early Abdalees,” 446.

¹⁷ Sulṭān Muḥammad, *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī*, 53.

¹⁸ As alluded to above, British Library manuscript Or. 1877 includes a second *nasab-nāma* comprising fols. 57a–79b, which, unlike SAA, is dedicated to non-Abdālī Afghan tribes. For further details on this work, see Charles Rieu, *Catalogue of the Persian Manuscripts in the British Museum*, 3 vols. (London, 1879–83; repr., 1966), 3:904b. Given the appearance of the title *Shajara wa silsila-i Afghāniyya* at the end of the manuscript, it has been employed herein to denote the second *nasab-nāma* and to thereby distinguish it from the SAA.

¹⁹ *Shajara wa silsila-i Afghāniyya*, MS, British Library, Or. 1877, fol. 79b.

possession of Sardār Muḥammad ‘Alam Khān b. Sardār Muḥammad Raḥmdil Khān, a leading Bārakzay military officer based in Qandahar.²⁰ While the above statements do not indicate the work’s author, they suggest that it was commissioned by, and circulated among, local Abdālī-Durrānī figures of note. For this reason, it seems reasonable to infer that the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* was composed by authors with close ties to the Abdālī-Durrānī and who were therefore likely able to draw upon the tribal confederacy’s folklore and oral traditions.

The precise date of the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī*’s composition is not entirely clear either. Rieu postulated a mid-eighteenth century date for the British Library manuscript due to its lack of references to the Durrānī dynasty and because the last major historical event it mentions is Nādir Shāh’s siege of Qandahar, which began in 1149/1737.²¹ However, the term “Durrānī” does, in fact, appear early on in the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī*’s account, indicating that it was written after Aḥmad Shāh’s accession in 1747 when the tribal designation “Durrānī” was formally adopted.²² Leech’s translation of the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* brings its account of Abdālī history down to the reign of Aḥmad Shāh, which indicates that the work must have been completed no earlier than 1160/1747. Sulṭān Muḥammad’s imprecise statement that the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* “was composed in the era of Ṣadōzay rule” (*dar*

²⁰ Sulṭān Muḥammad, *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī*, 52. Further information on Sardār Muḥammad ‘Alam Khān may be gleaned from Fayz Muḥammad Kātib Hazāra’s *ST*; see Fayz Muḥammad Kātib Hazāra, *The History of Afghanistan: Fayz Muḥammad Kātib Hazārah’s Sirāj al-tawārīkh*, trans. R. D. McChesney and M. M. Khorrami, 3 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 1:217–19. While there are several editions and translations of the *ST*, arguably the most important chronicle for the nineteenth and early twentieth century history of Afghanistan, all references here are to the English translation of McChesney and Khorrami, which includes a detailed introduction to the work as well as extensive commentary, notes, appendices, indices, and a bibliography.

²¹ Rieu, *Catalogue of the Persian Manuscripts*, 3:904a/b. In fact, the term “Durrānī” is found in the manuscript; see *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī*, fol. 18a. This reference indicates that the SAA was written after Aḥmad Shāh’s accession when the tribal designation “Durrānī” was formally adopted.

²² *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī*, fol. 18a.

awān-i dawlat-i Ṣadōzay ta'lif shuda)²³ confirms the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* was likely written between 1160/1747 and 1233/1818.²⁴ The work's description of a supposedly old rivalry between Sadōzay and Bārakzay appears to be an instance of its author(s) writing the specifically nineteenth-century political rivalry between the Sadōzay and Bārakzay onto the more distant past.²⁵ This anachronism, one of a few in the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī*, suggests the work was brought to completion in the first decades of the nineteenth century.

Not unlike genealogical tracts dedicated to other nomadic tribal groups, the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī*'s accounts of Abdālī figures from the remote past are sketchy and lacking in details. On the other hand, its accounts of Abdālī leaders active closer to the period in which it was composed are generally more detailed, in some cases even being corroborated by outside sources. Unfortunately, the work does not include dates and refers only in passing to the duration in power of a rather limited number of Abdālī leaders. The brevity of its narratives of early Abdālī history along with the greater emphasis on later chiefs of the confederacy is indicative that the authors of the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* based their account primarily on oral traditions current among the Abdālī at the time of the work's composition.

Despite its shortcomings, the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* offers unique data about the Abdālī not found in other primary sources. Moreover, to the best of my knowledge, the British Library manuscript of the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* has not been utilized in any study

²³ Ṣadō and Ṣadōzay are variations of Sadō and Sadōzay that are sometimes encountered in the sources, including, for instance, ḤSh, TSu, *Tārīkh-i khūrshīd-i jahān*, and the history of 'Abd al-Karīm "Bukhārī." To further complicate matters, in certain cases (e.g., TSu and *Tārīkh-i khūrshīd-i jahān*) both variants, i.e. Ṣadōzay and Sadōzay, are employed in the same work. That said, Sadōzay appears to be the more common appellation.

²⁴ Sulṭān Muḥammad, *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī*, 52. Although the Sadōzay dynasty came to an end with the death of Shāh Shujā' Durrānī in 1842 following the First Anglo-Afghan War, the deposition of his brother Shāh Maḥmūd in 1233/1818 is usually viewed as marking the real end of effective Sadōzay rule; see Christine Noelle[-Karimi], *State and Tribe in Nineteenth-Century Afghanistan: The Reign of Amir Dost Muhammad Khan (1826-1863)* (Richmond: Curzon, 1997), 1-4.

²⁵ *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī*, fols. 24a-24b.

of the Abdālī.²⁶ For these reasons, it will thus serve as an important source for this dissertation's study of Abdālī history. The only attested source to offer a comparable amount of information on the Abdālī in pre-Durrānī times is the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i 'ālī-shān az awlād-i Sadō mīr-i Afghān*.

Tazkirat al-mulūk-i 'ālī-shān by 'Alī Muḥammad Khān Khudaka Sadōzay

The *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i 'ālī-shān az awlād-i Sadō mīr-i Afghān* (Biography of sublime sovereigns among the progeny of Sadō, chief of the Afghans) (henceforth *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i 'ālī-shān*; TMA in notes) by 'Alī Muḥammad Khān b. Dīn Muḥammad Khān (1193–1256/1779–1840) represents another rare genealogical history of the Abdālī. The author was born in the city of Multan in Ṣafar 1193/February–March 1779 to an influential family of Khudaka Sadōzay. The Khudakas are named after their ancestor Sulṭān Khudādād Sadōzay, a grandson of Asad Allāh or Sadō, the eponym of the Sadōzay clan.²⁷ According to tradition, members of the Khudaka family settled in Multan in the second half of the seventeenth century and formed an integral part of the nobility of the city in the period of Durrānī authority in the Punjab. 'Alī Muḥammad Khān himself was a courtier of Shāh Shujā' al-Mulk (d. 1258/1842) during the latter's extended residency in the Punjab and is said to have produced official documents on behalf of the exiled Durrānī ruler.²⁸

²⁶ The work is briefly mentioned in Green, "Tribe, Diaspora, and Sainthood in Afghan History," 201n51.

²⁷ According to Ḥayāt Khān, the Pashto equivalent of the Persian name Khudā-dād (lit., "gift of God") is Khudā-kay and it is for this reason that Khudādād's descendants are referred to as "Khudaka"; see Muḥammad Ḥayāt Khān, *Ḥayāt-i Afghānī* (Lahore, 1246/1867), 143.

²⁸ 'Alī Muḥammad Khān was apparently assigned by Shāh Shujā' to seek the assistance of the Sikh ruler Ranjit Singh (d. 1255/1839) in recapturing Multan on behalf of the Sadōzay. The author also served as a Sadōzay ambassador at the court of Ranjit Singh and is mentioned with some frequency in the Sikh chronicle *Umdat al-tawārikh*. See Durrani, *Multān under the Afghāns*, 179–80. For a brief biographical sketch of the TMA's author, see Umar Kamal Khan, *Rise of Saddozais and Emancipation of Afghans: A History of the Part Played by Multanis for the Establishment of Independent Afghanistan from the Year 1638 A.D. to Year 1747 A.D.* (Multan: Bazam-e-Saqafat, 1999),

Beyond his close involvement in the turbulent politics of northern India in the first half of the nineteenth century, ‘Alī Muḥammad Khān took an interest in Afghan history, especially as it related to the Sadōzay. The author was well acquainted with the Iranian and Indo-Persian historiographical traditions and claims to have utilized many of the well-known histories composed under Safavid, Mughal, Nādirid, and Durrānī auspices for the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān*. However, much of his information appears to have derived from oral traditions and family histories of the Abdālī. This includes the now lost *Risāla-i akhbār-i Khudaka*, which, as the title suggests, was a treatise dedicated to the Khudaka community of Multan.²⁹ ‘Alī Muḥammad Khān completed the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān*, which is his only known work, on 7 Muḥarram 1251/May 5, 1835, just a few years before passing away in Multan in 1256/1840.

In the preface to the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān*, ‘Alī Muḥammad Khān describes the work as consisting of the following parts: a *muqaddima* (introduction); two *aṣls* (lit., “root”)—the first being divided into two *far‘*s (lit., “branch”) and the second divided into five *far‘*s;

7–9. A reference to the author petitioning the Sikh court for financial aid can be found in Sohan Lal Suri, *An Outstanding Original Source of Panjab History: Umdat-ut-tawarikh, Daftar III, Parts I–IV; Chronicle of the Reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, 1831–1839 A.D.*, trans. V.S. Suri (Delhi: S. Chand, 1961), 173.

²⁹ While the TMA itself does not appear to specify the *Risāla*’s author, Kamal Khan states, on authority of ‘Abd al-Ḥayy Ḥabībī, that a certain “Akbar Khudaka” authored it. However, as Ḥabībī did not consult the TMA and knew of the *Risāla* mainly from Raverty’s English translation of the TMA’s introduction, he was in no position to know the *Risāla*’s author. The assertion that “Akbar Khudaka” authored the treatise seems to stem from Ḥabībī’s reading of Raverty’s mis-transliteration of the word “akhbār” from the title *Risāla-i akhbār-i Khudaka* as “Akbar.” Kamal Khan, in turn, seems to have repeated this error in his study of the Sadōzay; see Kamal Khan, *Rise of Saddozais*, 9–12; ‘Abd al-Ḥayy Ḥabībī, *Tārīkh-i Afghānistān ba’d az Islām* (Kabul: Anjuman-i Tārīkh-i Afghānistān, 1345 H.sh./1966), 80n3; and Henry George Raverty, *A Grammar of the Pukhto, Pushto, or the Language of the Afghāns* (Calcutta, 1855), 9. In light of the above, the assertion that “Akbar Khudaka” authored the *Risāla* is unsubstantiated.

and a *khātima* (conclusion).³⁰ The *muqaddima* comprises an account of the origins of the Afghans but with a focus on the genealogy of the Abdālī confederacy down to the time of Asad Allāh or Sadō.³¹ The first *aṣl* focuses on the activities of Sadō and his descendants (i.e., Sadōzay, or “sons of Sadō”) whose activities were centered in what is referred to as the *wilāyat* (lit., “province”), a territorial term used in the work to denote northwestern territories of India, though in the specific context of the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān*, it also denotes the region of Khurasan where the Abdālī were politically active, especially Qandahar and its surrounding region.³² The first *far‘* of the first *aṣl* describes the lives and careers of those members of the Sadōzay clan who assumed rulership over the confederacy. The second *far‘* of the first *aṣl* describes the remaining Sadōzay (*baqiya-i awlād-ash*) who resided in the *wilāyat*. The second *aṣl* focuses on members of the Sadōzay clan who emigrated from the *wilāyat* to Multan. Each of the five *far‘*s in this second *aṣl* are dedicated to the lineages descended from the five sons of Sadō: the first *far‘* on the Mawdūd Khēl; the second *far‘* on the Bahādur Khēl; the third *far‘* on the Kāmṛān Khēl; the fourth *far‘* on the Ṣa‘farān Khēl; and the fifth *far‘* on the Khwāja Khiṣr Khēl—this last lineage being known as the *sulṭān khēl* or the “ruling lineage” to which Aḥmad Shāh and the Khudakas are said to have belonged. The *khātima* gives an account of the remaining members of the Khwāja Khiṣr Khēl who resettled in the lands of India and the Punjab.

³⁰ See ‘Alī Muḥammad Khān Khudaka, *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān az awlād-i Sadō mīr-i Afghān*, MS, British Library, I.O. Islamic 3742, fols. 2b–3a. The contents of the TMA are also summarized in Raverty, *A Grammar of the Pukhto*, 9n; Kamal Khan, *Rise of Saddozais*, 12–14.

³¹ Raverty’s translation of the TMA’s *muqaddima* appears in the introduction to his work on Pashto grammar; see Raverty, *A Grammar of the Pukhto*, 7–24.

³² A somewhat nebulous geographical term, *wilāyat* was used in pre-modern India in a broad sense to denote the territory of Iran. According to Gommans, by the eighteenth century, *wilāyat* came to refer more specifically to the northwestern frontier region of the Indian subcontinent inhabited by the Afghans. See Gommans, *The Rise of the Indo-Afghan Empire*, 10.

The *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān* is, along with the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī*, one of few primary sources to offer a grand narrative of Abdālī history. Like the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī*, it reads like an elaborate genealogical tract and provides relatively detailed accounts of individual Abdālī leaders beginning with the confederacy’s eponymous ancestor, Abdāl b. Tarīn. Also like the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī*, its account of the Abdālī appears to be based largely on oral traditions. But, as discussed in subsequent chapters, the genealogical and historical data given about the Abdālī in the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān* differs in important respects from that in *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī*. It is also the more comprehensive of the two sources; in addition to giving attention to a broader array of individuals belonging to the Sadōzay clan, it brings its account of the Abdālī down to 1251/1835—the year of its completion.

In spite of its significance, the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān* has escaped the notice of most authors writing on the Abdālī. Ashiq Muhammad Khan Durrani and Umar Kamal Khan, members of the Sadōzay community in Multan, are two authors known to have consulted manuscripts of the work.³³ The neglect of the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān* among the broader scholarly community is presumably due to the scarcity of and the perceived lack of access to manuscripts of the work. According to Kamal Khan, there exist four known manuscripts of

³³ Umar Kamal Khan, a descendent of the TMA’s author ‘Alī Muḥammad Khān Khudaka, relied on a family-owned manuscript of the TMA for his following publications about the Sadōzay: *Rise of Saddozais*, and *Saddozais in Multan: A Resume of Events Connected with the History of Saddozais in Multan from 1652 AD to 1966 AD* (Lahore: Lion, 1966). Kamal Khan’s relative, A. M. K. Durrani, now Professor Emeritus of the Department of History at the Bahauddin Zakariya University in Multan (formerly University of Multan), also used the manuscript owned by Kamal Khan for his studies dedicated to the history of Multan. In both his doctoral dissertation and the monograph evolving out of his dissertation, A. M. K. Durrani thanks his relative Kamal Khan “for the facility to consult the original unpublished Persian manuscript – ‘Tazkirat-ul-Muluk’”; see Ashiq Muhammad Khan Durrani, “The Last Phase of Muslim Rule in Multan (1752–1818)” (PhD diss., University of Multan, 1980), i; and Durrani, *Multān under the Afghāns*, xi.

the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān*, three of which are located in the private collections of Khudaka families in Multan and a fourth that is now unaccounted for.³⁴

Although I have not yet had the opportunity to consult any of the aforementioned manuscripts located in Pakistan, during the course of my research I was fortunate enough to chance upon another, apparently incomplete Persian manuscript of the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān*, which is part of the Raverty collection in the British Library.³⁵ This manuscript, which is 96 folios, comprises the *muqaddima* and what appears to be the entire first *aṣl* of the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān*.³⁶ Fortunately, it is precisely this section of the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān* that contains the data about Abdālī-Durrānī history that is germane to the present

³⁴ For details about these four manuscripts in Pakistan, see Kamal Khan, *Rise of Saddozais*, 14–17.

³⁵ I would like to thank Dr. Ursula Sims-Williams of the British Library for kindly supplying information on MS I.O. Islamic 3742 that made it possible to identify the manuscript as the *TMA*. The manuscript, which is date stamped 7 Sep. 1907, bears Raverty’s signature on a flyleaf at the beginning of the work and after the last line of text on fol. 93b. On p. 7 of his *A Grammar of the Pukhto*, Raverty notes that the version of the *TMA* that he consulted was written in Pashto, though both A. M. K. Durrani and Kamal Khan agree that the work was written in Persian and make no mention of a Pashto version. That Pashto versions of the *TMA* were produced is confirmed by George Curzon who indicates in his travelogue that the Bārakzay ruler, Amīr ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Khān (r. 1297–1319/1880–1901), had consulted the *TMA*, which is described as a Pashto history; see George N. Curzon, *Tales of Travel* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1923), 58–59n1. Indeed, the British Library manuscript includes two quotes attributed to Aḥmad Shāh Durrānī in Pashto (with interlinear Persian translations), which may derive from a Pashto copy of the *TMA*; the first passage appears in fol. 88b (ll. 11–13), while the second appears in fol. 89a (ll. 9–11). It is possible Raverty had access to a now unaccounted for Pashto copy of the *TMA*. But it is unclear whether this Pashto version was the original or a translation. Nor is it clear why A. M. K. Durrani and Kamal Khan, both well acquainted with the *TMA* and its author, fail to mention, and appear to have been unaware of, the existence of a Pashto version of the work.

³⁶ Since the British Library manuscript is incomplete, it is difficult to ascertain whether or not it comprises the entire first *aṣl* of the *TMA*. Access to additional manuscripts will allow for a better assessment of the full scope of the British Library manuscript. It is worth noting that the manuscript of the *TMA* owned by Kamal Khan consists of either 483 folios (according to A. M. K. Durrani) or pages (according to Kamal Khan); see Durrani, *Multān under the Afghāns*, 179; and Kamal Khan, *Rise of Saddozais*, 15.

study. To my knowledge, this manuscript has yet to be utilized in any known study of the Abdālī.³⁷

Zubdat al-akhbār by Shēr Muḥammad Nādir

The *Zubdat al-akhbār* (The quintessence of histories) (ZA in notes) is, like *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān*, an early nineteenth-century source on the history of the Sadōzay of Multan. Its author, Shēr Muḥammad, known by the penname (*takhalluṣ*) Nādir, was a secretary (*munshī*) in the service of Nawāb Sarafrāz Khān (d. 1267/1851). The latter was the eldest son of Nawāb Muḥaffar Khān (d. 1233/1818), a Mawdūd Khēl Sadōzay who was appointed governor (*nāzim*) of Multan by Tīmūr Shāh b. Aḥmad Shāh Durrānī in 1194/1780. Before Muḥaffar Khān made the pilgrimage to Mecca in 1222/1807, he appointed Sarafrāz Khān as his deputy and both subsequently governed the province of Multan together until the Sikh conquest of 1233/1818. Muḥaffar Khān died during this Sikh invasion and Sarafrāz Khān was subsequently sent to Lahore. Shēr Muḥammad Nādir joined his patron in Lahore where he completed the work in 1248/1832.³⁸

The *Zubdat al-akhbār* is dedicated to the tumultuous political history of Multan from the Mughal period in the seventeenth century down to the Sikh conquest of 1233/1818. Especial emphasis is placed on the family of Sarafrāz Khān, who is described as belonging to a *khān khēl* or “chiefly lineage” of the Abdālī confederacy—here a reference to Mawdūd Khēl

³⁷ For his doctoral dissertation, Joseph T. Arlinghaus consulted excerpts of the *TMA* that were translated into English by Raverty and that are currently located in the University of London’s SOAS Library. He also mentions the British Library manuscript of the *TMA* by its shelfmark I.O. 3742 but does not identify its title or author, which suggests he did not consult the manuscript in question and knew of its existence mainly through Raverty’s notes. See Arlinghaus, “The Transformation of Afghan Tribal Society,” 90–99, 126.

³⁸ See Shēr Muḥammad Nādir, *Zubdat al-akhbār: A History of the Saddozai Afghans of Multan*, ed. Ahmad Nabi Khan (Lahore: Research Society of Pakistan, 1977). The work is also described in Durrani, *Multān under the Afghāns*, 187.

segment of the Sadōzay clan.³⁹ The work presents a history of the Sadōzay from the time of the clan's eponym, Sadō, and describes such important events as the relocation of Shāh Ḥusayn b. Mawdūd to Multan in the seventeenth century, the incorporation of Multan into the Durrānī domain in the reign of Aḥmad Shāh, the Sikh conquest in ca. 1185/1772, and the rule of the Nawābs Muẓaffar Khān and Sarafrāz Khān (1194–1233/1780–1818) during the reign of Tīmūr Shāh. The work also contains accounts of non-Sadōzay governors, as well as a separate section dedicated to contemporary religious figures, scribes, and intellectuals of note in Multan.⁴⁰

The *Zubdat al-akhbār* complements the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ʿālī-shān* in some respects but is quite distinctive in others. It is, for instance, much less comprehensive in scope, gives pride of place to the Mawdūd Khēl rather than the Khwāja Khiẓr Khēl, and offers an account of the early history of the Sadōzay that differs appreciably from that of the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ʿālī-shān*. The unique features of the *Zubdat al-akhbār* make it an ideal work to analyze alongside the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ʿālī-shān* and other sources about Abdālī history.

Ahmad Nabi Khan's edition of the *Zubdat al-akhbār* is based on a manuscript of the work in the possession of the Research Society of Pakistan in Lahore. This publication includes a preface and introduction in English and an Urdu preface, all by Nabi Khan. These

³⁹ According to sources like the ZA and the *Tārikh-i khūrshīd-i jahān*, the Mawdūd Khēl Sadōzay represented the hereditary *khān khēl* of the Abdālī confederacy; see Shēr Muḥammad Khān Gandāpūrī, *Tārikh-i khūrshīd-i jahān* (Peshawar: University Book Agency, 1990), 171, 182. In the TMA, we read of the Khwāja Khiẓr Khēl alternatively as the *sulṭān khēl* (cf. §1.1.1). In some sources Aḥmad Shāh Durrānī, who belonged to the Khwāja Khiẓr Khēl segment of the Sadōzay clan, is also attributed *khān khēl* status (see §6.5, note 196). This would suggest that there were multiple *khān khēls* among the Abdālī, as with other, non-Abdālī Afghan tribal groups. For the *khān khēl* phenomenon among the Ghilzay Afghans, as an example, see Anderson, "Doing Pakhtu," 44, 58.

⁴⁰ Thus, while the Sadōzay play a central role in the ZA, it is not merely a history of the Sadōzay of Multan. For more on the author and his purpose in composing the work, see Nādir, *Zubdat al-akhbār*, 1–5.

are followed by the Persian text of Shēr Muḥammad's *Zubdat al-akhbār*.⁴¹ The Urdu preface and Persian text are both paginated using Arabic numerals. All page references are to the Persian text of the *Zubdat al-akhbār*.

Aḥwāl-i aqwām-i chahārgāna-i Afghān by Sayyid Maḥmūd al-Mūsawī

The *Aḥwāl-i aqwām-i chahārgāna-i Afghān* (The affairs of the four Afghan tribes) was authored by Maḥmūd al-Mūsawī. In the work the author notes that, at the time of his writing, the Durrānī had been in power for sixty-three years (1160+63=1223), which indicates it was completed in 1223/1809.⁴² In addition, the author provides hints throughout the text that he was writing during the first reign of Shāh Shujā' al-Mulk Durrānī (1218–23/1803–9).⁴³

At the beginning of the *Aḥwāl-i aqwām-i chahārgāna-i Afghān*, Maḥmūd al-Mūsawī states that he wrote the treatise at the request of a certain Mr. Seton. This is likely a reference to the British official Archibald Seton, who was appointed by the East India Company as “President” at the court of the Mughals in Delhi between 1806 and 1811.⁴⁴ As the *Aḥwāl-i aqwām-i chahārgāna-i Afghān* was written at the request of Archibald Seton in 1809, we may infer that it was likely composed during the latter's tenure in Delhi.⁴⁵ Moreover,

⁴¹ The English preface and introduction to Nabi Khan's edition of the ZA is also available as a standalone publication; see Ahmad Nabi Khan, *A History of the Saddozai Afghans of Multan* (Lahore: Research Society of Pakistan, 1977). It should be noted that Nabi Khan's introduction includes some information that conflicts with that found in the ZA.

⁴² Maḥmūd al-Mūsawī, *Aḥwāl-i aqwām-i chahārgāna-i Afghān*, MS, British Library, Or. 1861, fol. 4a.

⁴³ On the dating of this work, see Rieu, *Catalogue of the Persian Manuscripts*, 3:1032b–1033a; Storey, *Persian Literature*, 1:399–400; and Stori, *Persidskaia literatura*, trans. and rev. Bregel, 2:1224. The British Library manuscript appears to be the only known copy of the AACHA.

⁴⁴ Sylvanus Urban, ed., “Archibald Seton, Esq.” *Gentleman's Magazine and Historical Chronicle*, n.s., 88, no. 2 (1818): 184–85.

⁴⁵ That this manuscript includes a second treatise dedicated to the biographies of calligraphers in Delhi (title: *Risāla dar tazkira-i kh^wush-nawīsān-i Dihlī*) during the Mughal period supports the assertion that the work was composed in Delhi.

from Maḥmūd al-Mūsawī's benediction to Aḥmad Shāh Durrānī in different parts of the work, we may deduce that he was a representative of one of the Durrānī rulers at Delhi, likely Shāh Shujā' al-Mulk, who figures prominently in the work.⁴⁶

The treatise consists of 44 folios and is divided into four parts, each dedicated to one of the following four Afghan tribal groupings: the Abdālī-Durrānī (fols. 4a–29a); the Ghilzay (29a–32b); the Bar-Durrānī (32b–43a); and the Sūrs, whom the author equates with the Yūsufzay (43a–44a).⁴⁷ This fourfold division likely represents the manner in which officials in the Durrānī administration categorized the Afghan tribes.⁴⁸

The *Aḥwāl-i aqwām-i chahārgāna-i Afghān* can be described as a biographical dictionary of influential members of the above four tribal groupings. It provides insights into the complex political situation in the Durrānī realm, especially after the death of Tīmūr Shāh b. Aḥmad Shāh (1186–1207/1773–93). The first part of the *Aḥwāl-i aqwām-i chahārgāna-i Afghān* that is dedicated to prominent Abdālī-Durrānī figures from the Safavid period (907–1135/1501–1722) to the early-nineteenth century is of especial relevance to this dissertation.

Additional Genealogical Histories

Two other genealogical histories will be consulted in this dissertation. The first is the *Tārīkh-i muraṣṣa'* (The jewelled history), an Afghan genealogical history completed in ca. 1724 and ascribed to Afzal Khān Khatak, a grandson of the celebrated Pashtun warrior and poet Kh^wushḥāl Khān Khatak (d. 1100/1689).⁴⁹ The initial part of the *Tārīkh-i muraṣṣa'* is a

⁴⁶ Maḥmūd al-Mūsawī, *Aḥwāl-i aqwām-i chahārgāna-i Afghān*, fols. 6a, 9b.

⁴⁷ On fol. 42a, Maḥmūd al-Mūsawī writes: “They [i.e., Sūrs] are called ‘Yūsufzay’ (*ānhā rā Yūsufzay gūyand*).”

⁴⁸ On the artificiality of the AACHA categorization of the Afghans, also see Gommans, *The Rise of the Indo-Afghan Empire*, 170n33.

⁴⁹ For more details on Afzal Khān's *Tārīkh-i muraṣṣa'*, see James Fuller Blumhardt and D. N. MacKenzie, *Catalogue of Pashto Manuscripts in the Libraries of the British Isles: Bodleian Library, the British Museum, Cambridge University*

Pashto translation of Ni‘mat Allāh’s *Tārīkh-i Khān Jahānī* while the latter part of the book contains a history of various Afghan tribes of the Peshawar region including the Khataks (the tribe to which the author belonged), Khashī and Ghōrī that was drawn in part from the *Tazkirat al-abrār wa al-ashrār* of Ākhūnd Darwīza (d. ca. 1048/1638–39).⁵⁰ The second work to be consulted is the *Tawārīkh-i Ḥāfiẓ Raḥmat Khānī*⁵¹ (sometimes called *Tārīkh-i Raḥmat Khānī*), which was written in ca. 1181/1767–68 in Pashto (interspersed with summaries in Persian) by Pīr Mu‘azzam Shāh for his patron, Ḥāfiẓ Raḥmat Khān (d. 1188/1774).⁵² Pīr Mu‘azzam’s work is said to be a more readable recension of an earlier history of the Yūsufzay confederacy called *Tawārīkh-i Afāghina*, which was composed in 1032/1624.⁵³ Of primary

Library, India Office Library, John Rylands Library, School of Oriental and African Studies, Trinity College Dublin (London: Trustees of the British Museum and the Commonwealth Relations Office, 1965), 44–48; and Mikhail Pelevin, “The Khatak’s Tribal Chronicle (XVII–XVIII): Extraliterary Text Functions,” *Iran and the Caucasus* 18, no. 3 (2014): 201–12.

⁵⁰ Though in large part a polemic against the Rōshaniyya movement, the *Tazkirat al-abrār wa al-ashrār* also contains an important section of the history of the Afghans that Afzal Khān drew upon for the *Tārīkh-i muraṣṣa‘*. For more on the work of Ākhūnd Darwīza, see Rieu, *Catalogue of the Persian Manuscripts*, 1:28a; and Arlinghaus, “The Transformation of Afghan Tribal Society,” 32n.

⁵¹ Not to be confused with the Persian abridgement of the *Tawārīkh-i Ḥāfiẓ Raḥmat Khānī*, known by the same title, which was written soon after the original (in ca. 1184/1770–71) by Ḥāfiẓ Muḥammad Ṣādiq, also for Ḥāfiẓ Raḥmat Khān. For the manuscript copy of this abridgement in the British Library, see Hermann Ethé, *Catalogue of Persian Manuscripts in the Library of the India Office*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Printed for the India Office by H. Hart, 1903–37), 1:233–34.

⁵² Pīr Mu‘azzam Shāh, *Tawārīkh-i Ḥāfiẓ Raḥmat Khānī*, ed. Muḥammad Nawāz Ṭā‘ir (Peshawar: Pashto Academy, 1971), 1–3. For more on the work, see Storey, *Persian Literature*, 1:396; Stori, *Persidskaia literatura*, trans. and rev. Bregel, 2:1217; Blumhardt and MacKenzie, *Catalogue of Pashto Manuscripts*, 49–50; Arlinghaus, “The Transformation of Afghan Tribal Society,” 31, 337; and Robert Nichols, “Reclaiming the Past: The *Tawarikh-i Hafiz Rahmat Khani* and Pashtun Historiography,” in *Afghan History through Afghan Eyes*, ed. Nile Green (London: Hurst, 2016), 211–34.

⁵³ Pīr Mu‘azzam Shāh, *Tawārīkh-i Ḥāfiẓ Raḥmat Khānī*, 2–3. For the differing views about the authorship of the *Tawārīkh-i Afāghina*, besides the foregoing see Rieu, *Catalogue of the Persian Manuscripts*, 1:230a; Bernhard Dorn, “Beitrag zur Geschichte des afghanischen Stammes der Jusufsey,” *Bulletin Scientifique publié par l’Académie Impériale des Sciences de Saint-Pétersbourg* 4, no. 73 (1838): 5–16; Dorn, *History of the Afghans*, 1:xi–xii; and Wilhelm Pertsch, *Verzeichniss der persischen Handschriften der Königl. Bibliothek zu Berlin* (Berlin, 1888), 459–61.

concern for this dissertation are the accounts in both works about the migrations of Afghan tribes, namely the Khashī, from Qandahar to Peshawar between the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The Khashī migrations from Qandahar are supposed to have been precipitated by the confederacy's rivalry with the Tarīnī, who, according to various Afghan histories, are related genealogically to the Abdālī.

1.1.2: Safavid-, Mughal-, and Nādirid-Era Sources

Although the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* and the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ʿālī-shān* are the most informative sources available on the origins and history of the Abdālī, the data contained in these genealogical histories, particularly as they relate to the early period of Abdālī history, are often not corroborated by sources written in the seventeenth century and earlier. In contrast, we possess more data about the Abdālī in sources dating back to the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century. It was by this time that the power of the Abdālī had grown to the point where their leaders were able to assert their political autonomy in Khurasan. This growth in Abdālī influence is reflected in contemporary Safavid, Mughal, and Nādirid sources that mention members of the confederacy with a degree of frequency not witnessed earlier. As many of these documents were produced outside Abdālī-Durrānī political milieus, they are in many ways ideal for comparing, contrasting, and supplementing the data found in the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* and the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ʿālī-shān*. Reading these genealogical histories alongside outside sources allows for a more balanced perspective on events concerning the Abdālī in the period leading up to the formation of the Durrānī polity.

Safavid and Mughal Histories

The Abdālī begin to appear consistently in seventeenth century Safavid and Mughal chronicles written in Persian that describe the rivalry for control of Qandahar—an important province on the eastern periphery of Safavid Khurasan. The highpoint of this rivalry occurred between 1031/1622 and 1063/1653, after which Qandahar devolved to Safavid control until 1121/1709. Among the Mughal sources that mention the Abdālī in the context of the conflict over Qandahar are the *Bādshāh-nāma* of ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd Lāhōrī and the *‘Amal-i Ṣāliḥ* of Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ Kambū, which chronicle the reign of Shāh Jahān (r. 1037–68/1628–58).⁵⁴ Among the Safavid sources examined are the chronicles dedicated to the reign of Shāh ‘Abbās I, the *Tārīkh-i ‘ālam-ārā-yi ‘Abbāsī* of Iskandar Bēg Turkmān Munshī and the *Afzal al-tawārīkh* of Fazlī Bēg Khūzānī.⁵⁵ Chronicles on the post-Shāh ‘Abbās I period of Safavid history include the *Khuld-i barīn* of Muḥammad Yūsuf Wālih-Iṣfahānī, the *Qīṣaṣ al-khāqānī* of Walī-Qulī Shāmlū, and the *Tārīkh-i jahānārā-yi ‘Abbāsī* (also known as *‘Abbāsnāma*) of Muḥammad Ṭāhir Waḥīd Qazwīnī.⁵⁶ Later Safavid and Mughal works like *Mir’āt-i wārīdāt*, *Zubdat al-tawārīkh*, *Fawā’id al-Ṣafawiyya*, and *Ṣaḥīfat al-irshād* provide valuable insights into

⁵⁴ ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd Lāhōrī, *Bādshāh-nāma*, ed. Kabīr al-Dīn Aḥmad and ‘Abd al-Rahīm, 2 vols. (Calcutta, 1867–68); and Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ Kambū, *‘Amal-i Ṣāliḥ: Al-mawsūm bi Shāhjahān-nāma*, ed. Ghulām Yazdānī and Waḥīd Qurayshī, 3 vols. (Lahore: Majlis-i Taraqqī-i Adab, 1967–72).

⁵⁵ Iskandar Bēg Turkmān Munshī, *Tārīkh-i ‘ālam-ārā-yi ‘Abbāsī*, ed. Īrāj Afshār, 3 vols. in 2. (Tehran: Amīr Kabīr, 1335 H.sh./1956; repr., 1350 H.sh./1971); and Fazlī Bēg Khūzānī Ṣafāhānī, *Afzal al-tawārīkh*, ed. Kioumars Ghareghlou (n.p.: The E. J. W. Gibb Memorial Trust, 2015). Also of relevance to this study is Muḥammad Yūsuf’s supplement (*zayl*) to Iskandar Bēg’s TAAA; see Muḥammad Yūsuf, *Zayl-i Tārīkh-i ‘ālam-ārā-yi ‘Abbāsī*, ed. Aḥmad Suhaylī Khwānsārī (Tehran: Chāpkhāna-i Islāmiyya, 1317 H.sh./1938).

⁵⁶ Muḥammad Yūsuf Wālih-Iṣfahānī, *Īrān dar zamān-i Shāh Ṣafī wa Shāh ‘Abbās-i duwwum (1038-1071 H.Q.): Ḥadīqa-i shishum wa haftum az Rawza-i shishum-i Khuld-i barīn*, ed. Muḥammad Riżā Naṣīrī (Tehran: Anjuman-i Āṣār wa Mafākhīr-i Farhangī, 1382 H.sh./2003); Walī-Qulī ibn Dāwūd-Qulī Shāmlū, *Qīṣaṣ al-khāqānī*, ed. Ḥasan Sādāt Nāṣīrī, 2 vols. (Tehran: Wizārat-i Farhang wa Irshād-i Islāmī, 1371–74 H.sh./1992–95); and Muḥammad Ṭāhir Waḥīd Qazwīnī, *Tārīkh-i jahānārā-yi ‘Abbāsī*, ed. Sa’īd Mīr Muḥammad Ṣādiq (Tehran: Pizhūhishgāh-i ‘Ulūm-i Insānī wa Muṭāla‘āt-i Farhangī, 1383 H.sh./2005).

the conditions prevailing in Khurasan and its neighboring lands in the early eighteenth century when Safavid rule was waning in the region.⁵⁷

The Safavid and Mughal sources tend to focus primarily on state-appointed military officers and on courtly affairs, while tribal groups located on the frontier, like the Abdālī, are mentioned only sporadically and usually in the context of military operations in the province of Qandahar. Moreover, there are many cases of overlap in the sources and so the accounts they provide of the Abdālī often do not differ appreciably from one another. Thus, while the Safavid and Mughal sources contain noteworthy references to the Abdālī, they are of partial relevance only and need not be described in great detail.

Tārīkh-i Nādirī by Mahdī Khān Astarābādī

As his *nisba* would indicate, Mahdī Khān b. Muḥammad Naṣīr Astarābādī was a native of Astarābād, present-day Gurgān in northeastern Iran. He began his career at an early age as a secretary at the Safavid court in Isfahan and remained in the city during the period of Ghilzay rule (1135–42/1722–29). After Nādir Shāh's expulsion of the Ghilzay in 1142/1729, Mahdī Khān was admitted into the secretariat of the Nādirid state and, on account of his experience and talents in epistolography, soon attained the lofty rank of *Munshī al-mamālīk* (Secretary of the realm). Following Nādir's coronation in 1148/1736, Mahdī Khān was also

⁵⁷ Muḥammad Muḥsin Mustawfī, *Zubdat al-tawārīkh*, ed. Bihrūz Gūdarzī (Tehran: Mawqūfāt-i Duktur Maḥmūd Afshār Yazdī, 1375 H.sh./1996); Abū al-Ḥasan Qazwīnī, *Fawā'id al-Ṣafawiyya: Tārīkh-i salāṭīn wa umarā-yi Ṣafawiyya pas az suqūṭ-i dawlat-i Ṣafawiyya*, ed. Maryam Mīr Aḥmadī (Tehran: Muṭāla'āt wa Taḥqīqāt-i Farhangī, 1367 H.sh./1988); Muḥammad Shafī' Wārid Ṭīhrānī, *Mir'āt-i wāridāt: Tārīkh-i suqūṭ-i Ṣafawiyyān, payāmadhā-yi ān wa farmānrawā'ī-i Malik Maḥmūd Sīstānī*, ed. Mansur Sefatgol (Tehran: Mirās-i Maktūb, 1383 H.sh./2004); and Mullā Muḥammad Mu'min Kirmānī, *Ṣaḥīfat al-irshād: Tārīkh-i Afshār-i Kirmān, pāyān-i kār-i Ṣafawiyya*, ed. Muḥammad Ibrāhīm Bāstānī Pārīzī (Tehran: 'Ilm, 1384 H.sh./2005). For a description of the recently re-discovered section of the *Mir'āt-i wāridāt*, see Mansur Sefatgol, "Persian Historical Writing under the Last Safavids: The Historiographers of Decline," in "Liber Amicorum: Études sur l'Iran médiéval et moderne offertes à Jean Calmard," ed. Michele Bernardini, Masashi Haneda, and Maria Szuppe, *Eurasian Studies* 5, nos. 1–2 (2006): 323–26.

appointed the new monarch's official chronicler (*wāqī'a nawīs*). He remained a prominent figure at the Nādirid court until Nādir's death in 1160/1747 and was in Baghdad on an ambassadorial mission destined for Istanbul when news reached him of Nādir's assassination. He subsequently retired to Iran and spent the final years of his life completing a number of literary projects. An early manuscript of one such project, the *Tārīkh-i Nādirī*, is dated 1173/1759; it is thus speculated that Mahdī Khān passed away around this time.⁵⁸

The following are among the surviving works attributed to Mahdī Khān: a selection of his chancery compositions (*munsha'āt*);⁵⁹ a Chaghatay Turkish-Persian dictionary entitled *Sanglākh*;⁶⁰ and an accompanying manual of Chaghatay Turkish grammar, the *Mabānī al-lughat*.⁶¹ However, he is best known for his historical works written in Persian that chronicle the career highlights of Nādir Shāh: namely, the *Tārīkh-i Nādirī* (TN in notes), written mainly in prose, and the *Durra-i Nādira*, a prosimetrical work modeled on the famously ornate and verbose history of Waṣṣāf.⁶² The historical data in both his works are similar, though as

⁵⁸ For further biographical details on the author, see especially: Mahdī Khān Astarābādī, *Jahāngushā-yi Nādirī*, ed. 'Abd Allāh Anwār (Tehran: Anjuman-i Āṣār Millī, 1341 H.sh./1962), ii–viii; and Lockhart, *Nadir Shah*, 292–96.

⁵⁹ There are numerous publications of Mahdī Khān's chancery compositions. Among the more recent is: Naṣr Allāh Bayāt, *Guzida'i az munsha'āt-i Mīrzā Muḥammad Mahdī Khān Astarābādī*, *Munshī al-Mamālik-i Nādir Shāh Afshār: Mushtamil bar ṣulḥ-nāmahā, maqāwila-nāmahā, qarārdādhā, farmānhā, aḥkāṁ, nāmahā* (Tehran: Wizārat-i Umūr-i Khārija, 1383 H.sh./2005).

⁶⁰ A facsimile edition of the work was published under the title *Sanglax: A Persian Guide to the Turkish Language*, fac. ed. Gerard Clauson (London: Luzac, 1960). A subsequent edition by Rōshan Khiyāwī, cited earlier in §1.6, was published in Iran in 1995.

⁶¹ See Mahdī Khān Astarābādī, *The Mabānī'l-lughat: Being a Grammar of the Turki Language in Persian*, ed. E. Denison Ross (Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1910).

⁶² Mahdī Khān Astarābādī, *Durra-i Nādira: Tarīkh-i 'aṣr-i Nādir Shāh*, ed. Ja'far Shahīdī (Tehran: Chāpkhāna-i Dānishgāh-i Tihirān, 1341 H.sh./1962).

Lockhart points out the *Durra-i Nādira* includes some information that is not found in the *Tārīkh-i Nādirī* and is useful for cross-referencing data found in the latter work.⁶³

The main emphasis of the *Tārīkh-i Nādirī* is on affairs at the court of Nādir Shāh, concerning which the author had direct knowledge. The *Tārīkh-i Nādirī* has much to say about Nādir's dealings with Afghans like the Ghilzay and the Abdālī as well. It is among the more informative external sources on the Abdālī in the first half of the eighteenth century and provides useful data about Nādir's interactions with the Abdālī in Herat and Farāh, which became important centers of Abdālī power after they were pushed out of Qandahar by the Ghilzay. It includes accounts of the confrontations between the Abdālī and Nādirid forces in Khurasan, the final subjugation of the Abdālī, and their integration into the Afghan contingent in the Nādirid military. As fixtures in Nādir's military, the Abdālī accompanied the ruler during his campaigns to Iraq, the Caucasus, and India. The *Tārīkh-i Nādirī* also describes their important role during Nādir's invasion of Qandahar and the subsequent settlement of many Abdālī tribesmen to the province. The unique data that the *Tārīkh-i Nādirī* contains will be useful both to corroborate and to supplement the accounts of the Abdālī found in the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī*, the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i 'ālī-shān*, and later sources.

Several editions of the *Tārīkh-i Nādirī* have been published. This thesis will make use of the critical edition by 'Abd Allāh Anwār, which was published in 1962 under the title *Jahāngushā-yi Nādirī*.⁶⁴

⁶³ Lockhart, *Nadir Shah*, 296. For further information on Mahdī Khān and the TN, see Storey, *Persian Literature*, 1:322–24; and Stori, *Persidskaia literatura*, trans. and rev. Bregel, 2:905–14.

⁶⁴ Mahdī Khān's chronicle was widely known as the "*Tārīkh-i Nādirī*" historically, though it is also often referred to, especially in contemporary Iranian historiography, as the *Tārīkh-i Jahāngushā-yi Nādirī* or simply *Jahāngushā-yi Nādirī*; see Ernest Tucker, "Persian Historiography in the 18th and Early 19th Century," in *Persian Historiography*, ed. Charles Melville, vol. 10 of *A History of Persian Literature* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2012), 261. While

‘Ālam-ārā-yi Nādirī by Muḥammad Kāzīm Marwī

The *‘Ālam-ārā-yi Nādirī* (The world-adorning Nādir; AAN in notes) is another chronicle of the reign of Nādir Shāh written by Muḥammad Kāzīm Marwī who was born in the city of Marw in 1133/1720–21. Unlike his older contemporary Mahdī Khān, Muḥammad Kāzīm was not a Nādirid courtier, although his father was a companion of Nādir Shāh’s brother, Ibrāhīm Khān, and belonged to the latter’s retinue during his governorship in Azerbaijan. In 1149/1736, at the age of sixteen, he accompanied his father to Azerbaijan and began working as a low-ranking secretary in the records office (*daftar khāna*) at Tabriz. After the death of his father in 1151/1738, the author returned to his native Marw where he entered the service of the city’s governor-general (*bēglarbēg*). In 1153/1740 he was summoned along with the governor-general to appear before Nādir near Herat. He joined the ruler during his campaigns in Bukhara and Khwārazm where he served as an army registrar (*lashkar nawīs*). After these campaigns, he returned to Marw and worked as a *wazīr* or administrator overseeing the military expenditures of this frontier city.⁶⁵ Later, he accompanied the troops of Marw that were sent to support the Khān of Bukhara against local uprisings and it was during this campaign that word was received of Nādir’s assassination. He then returned to

citations of ‘Abd Allāh Anwār’s edition will include the title *Jahāngushā-yi Nādirī*, elsewhere in this dissertation I have maintained the use of the title *Tārīkh-i Nādirī* as well as the abbreviation *TN* in the notes.

⁶⁵ Muḥammad Kāzīm describes himself as the *wazīr* of Marw in the AAN. As Tucker has pointed out, according to the Safavid administrative manual, *Tazkirat al-mulūk*, the term *wazīr* was applied widely to secretaries of various military and civilian departments of the Safavid state. See Ernest Tucker, “Explaining Nadir Shah: Kingship and Royal Legitimacy in Muhammad Kazim Marwi’s *Tārīkh-i ‘ālam-ārā-yi Nādirī*,” *Iranian Studies* 26, nos. 1–2 (1993): 97n; see also Vladimir Minorsky, ed. and trans., *Tadhkirat al-mulūk: A Manual of Safavid Administration (Circa 1137/1725)* (n.p.: Trustees of the E. J. W. Gibb Memorial, 1943; repr., 1980), 141.

Marw where he worked on the *‘Ālam-ārā-yi Nādirī*, a project that was completed in ca. 1166/1752–53.⁶⁶ Nothing is known of Muḥammad Kāẓim beyond this last date.⁶⁷

The *‘Ālam-ārā-yi Nādirī* has been criticized for its lack of dates, poor organization, and frequent digressions into apocryphal tales of questionable historicity. In comparing the *Tārīkh-i Nādirī* and *‘Ālam-ārā-yi Nādirī*, scholars have also noted that Muḥammad Kāẓim borrowed freely from *Tārīkh-i Nādirī* and the work thus contains many of the same details.⁶⁸ But while it appears Muḥammad Kāẓim did rely on the *Tārīkh-i Nādirī* for information concerning those domains of Nādir’s empire of which he had little direct knowledge, it also includes a good deal of original data concerning events in Central Asia and Khurasan which are not found in Mahdī Khān’s chronicle.⁶⁹ Unlike the *Tārīkh-i Nādirī*, which focuses mainly on affairs at the court of Nādir Shāh, the *‘Ālam-ārā-yi Nādirī* has more to say about social and economic conditions in the Nādirid Empire that are not described in the *Tārīkh-i Nādirī*. And while many scholars believe that Muḥammad Kāẓim was not Mahdī Khān’s equal either as a litterateur or an historian, there is value in the fact that he was not bound by the same restrictions as the author of the *Tārīkh-i Nādirī* and hence the *‘Ālam-ārā-yi Nādirī* draws a more critical and realistic portrait of Nādir’s career as well as of the conditions prevailing in

⁶⁶ For details concerning the AAN’s dates of composition, as well as later amendments made to the work, see Muḥammad Kāẓim Marwī, *‘Ālam-ārā-yi Nādirī*, ed. Muḥammad Amīn Riyāḥī (Tehran: Kitābfurūshī-i Zawwār, 1364 H.sh./1985), 1:xxvii–xxix.

⁶⁷ For further biographical details on the author, see Muḥammad Kāẓim, *‘Ālam-ārā-yi Nādirī*, ed. Riyāḥī, 1:xviii–xxiii; and Lockhart, *Nadir Shah*, 297–99.

⁶⁸ Lockhart, *Nadir Shah*, 298.

⁶⁹ Muḥammad Kāẓim, *‘Ālam-ārā-yi Nādirī*, ed. Riyāḥī, 1:lii–liv.

the Nādirid realm at the time. It contributes in unique and important ways to our knowledge of the eighteenth-century history of Iran, Central Asia, and South Asia.⁷⁰

In terms of the activities of the Abdālī in the first half of the eighteenth century, the information in the *‘Ālam-ārā-yi Nādirī* is in many cases similar to that found in the *Tārīkh-i Nādirī*. But as Muḥammad Kāẓim’s hometown of Marw was in relatively close proximity to the centers of Afghan power in Khurasan, namely, Herat and Qandahar, the author was able to draw on the reports of informants (*rāwī*) with intimate knowledge of local affairs. As such, his chronicle includes valuable data about the Abdālī that is not found in the *Tārīkh-i Nādirī* or other Nādirid-era sources. Thus, along with the *Tārīkh-i Nādirī*, the *‘Ālam-ārā-yi Nādirī* will serve as an integral source for the analysis of the Abdālī in the pre-Durrānī period.

A facsimile of the sole extant manuscript of the *‘Ālam-ārā-yi Nādirī* was published in Moscow in three volumes (1960–64) and each of the three volumes contains a separate introduction written by N. D. Miklukho-Maklai.⁷¹ This facsimile edition served as the basis for Muḥammad Amīn Riyāḥī’s edition of the *‘Ālam-ārā-yi Nādirī*, which was published in Tehran in 1985, also in three volumes.⁷² All references in this dissertation are to the Riyāḥī edition of the *‘Ālam-ārā-yi Nādirī*.

⁷⁰ For further details on the AAN, see Storey, *Persian Literature*, 1:325; and Stori, *Persidskaia literatura*, trans. and rev. Bregel, 2:914–17.

⁷¹ Muḥammad Kāẓim, *Nāma-i ‘Ālam-ārā-yi Nādirī*, fac. ed. N. D. Miklukho-Maklai, 3 vols. (Moscow: Izdatel’stvo vostochnoi literatury, 1960–64).

⁷² Riyāḥī’s edition includes a Persian translation of Miklukho-Maklai’s introductions (in Russian) to each of the volumes of the AAN; see Muḥammad Kāẓim, *‘Ālam-ārā-yi Nādirī*, ed. Riyāḥī, 1:lix–xcv.

1.1.3: Miscellaneous Documents of Post-Safavid Iran

Yāddāshthā darbāra-i ḥamalāt-i Afāghina wa Uzbekān bi marzhā-yi shamāl-i sharqī-i Īrān by Faḏl ‘Alī Bayāt

Faḏl ‘Alī Bayāt was a retainer (*mulāzim*) of Fath ‘Alī Khān Turkmān (d. 1129/1717)—a Master of the Hunt (*mīr-shikār bāshī*) in the Safavid military who had been appointed governor of Nīshāpūr and charged with the task of subduing the recalcitrant Abdālī tribesmen of Khurasan. The author began writing his memoirs (*yāddāshthā*) on 26 Rabī‘ I 1128/21 March 1716, though the recently published version of his work only describes events that occurred in Khurasan between 20 Muḥarram 1129/3 January 1717 and an unspecified date in 1134/1721–22.⁷³ Despite their brevity, Faḏl ‘Alī’s memoirs provide rare accounts of the attacks launched by Turkmen, Uzbek, Abdālī, and Balūch tribesmen on the Safavid-controlled cities and towns of Khurasan, and the response of Safavid military officials to these attacks within this four-year period. His description of the battles between the Safavid armies and the forces led by the Abdālī chiefs Asad Allāh Khān (d. ca. 1130/1718) and Zamān Khān (d. ca. 1133/1721)—the cousin and father of Aḥmad Shāh, respectively—is particularly relevant to the study of the activities of Abdālī in the decades leading up to the formation of the Durrānī polity.

Reference will be made to the copy of the memoirs published as the third appendix to Sa‘īd Mīr Muḥammad Ṣādiq’s edition of ‘Abd al-Nabī Bihbahānī’s *Badāyi‘ al-akhbār*.⁷⁴

⁷³ The manuscript of these memoirs is in the Majlis-i Sinā-yi Sābiq Library in Tihrān. For a description of Faḏl ‘Alī’s memoir as well as his introductory remarks to the work, see ‘Abd al-Nabī Bihbahānī, *Badāyi‘ al-akhbār: Waqāyi‘-i Bihbahān dar zamān-i ḥamla-i Maḥmūd-i Afghān*, ed. Sayyid Sa‘īd Mīr Muḥammad Ṣādiq (Tehran: Markaz-i Pizhūhishī-i Mīrās-i Maktūb, 1389 H.sh./2010), xlii–xliv.

⁷⁴ Bihbahānī, *Badāyi‘ al-akhbār*, 107–11.

Decree issued by Zamān Khān Abdālī

Zamān Khān Abdālī issued a decree (*raqam*) that is dated Sha‘bān 1131/June-July 1719, shortly after he took control of Herat.⁷⁵ The decree announces that Zamān Khān dispatched his Head of the Dīwān (*dīwān bēg*), Yaḥyā Khān, at the head of an Abdālī contingent to punish a certain Qāsim Balūch who, it is claimed, had been harassing the population and especially the peasantry (*ra‘āyā*) of the towns of Ṭabas and Qā’in in southern Khurasan.⁷⁶ The decree orders the local inhabitants to cooperate with the Abdālī force.

Zamān Khān’s decree begins with Quranic references often cited by authors seeking to legitimize major political upheavals as being sanctioned by divine Decree. The decree also quotes the following popular maxim, believed by some Muslim political ideologues to be a prophetic hadith, according to which “Kingship can endure with unbelief [but] cannot endure with tyranny” (*al-mulk yabqā bi-al-kufr wa lā yabqā bi-al-ẓulm*).⁷⁷ The document represents an early attempt by the Abdālī to legitimize their rule in Herat and to win popular support by emphasizing Zamān Khān’s ability to dispense justice and provide security at a time when the representatives of the Safavid state had proven unable to do so. It thus offers a rare insight into the formative period of Abdālī rule in post-Safavid Khurasan, a subject that hitherto has received little attention.

⁷⁵ This decree does not contain Zamān Khān’s name, though it was issued during his rule in Herat. It appears it was copied by the aforementioned Faḏl ‘Alī Bayāt and can be found in manuscript no. 1116 in the Majlis-i Sinā-yi Sābiq Library. For further details, see Bihbahānī, *Badāyi’ al-akhbār*, xlvī–xlvii.

⁷⁶ The identity of this obscure Yaḥyā Khān and the nature of his relationship with the Abdālī of Herat remain unclear. He may be the Yaḥyā Khān referred to in contemporary sources as the governor of Sarakhs, which is in close proximity to Herat. See Bihbahānī, *Badāyi’ al-akhbār*, 110; and Mustawfī, *Zubdat al-tawārikh*, 176.

⁷⁷ For a discussion of this maxim and its expression in many works belonging to the genre of Persian advice literature, see Chad G. Lingwood, *Politics, Poetry, and Sufism in Medieval Iran: New Perspectives on Jami’s Salaman va Absal* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 46–48n.

References are to the copy of the decree (*sawād-i raqam*), which was published as the fifth appendix to Saʿīd Mīr Muḥammad Ṣādiq’s edition of the *Badāyiʿ al-akhbār*.⁷⁸

Yāddāshthā rājiʿ bi-hamla-i Afghān bi-sarhadd-i Īrān, anonymous

This collection of memoirs (*yāddāshthā*) describes a series of Abdālī raids against the towns of Khwāf and Qāʾin, both located west of the Abdālī centers in Herat and Farāh, over nearly a five-year span between 9 Shaʿbān 1134/22 May 1722 and 10 Rajab 1139/3 March 1727. The manuscript containing these memoirs was recently discovered in the Āstān-i Quds-i Rażawī Library in Mashhad. The authorship of the memoirs remains a mystery but Javad Abbasi speculates that they were penned by a local notable, perhaps even a Safavid official, active in southern Khurasan.⁷⁹

The document, which is 6 folios in length, is written from an understandably hostile perspective, and does not provide specific details about the Abdālī raiders (e.g. their leaders). Despite its brevity and lack of details, however, it is one of the few contemporary sources to shed light, however sparse, on the Abdālī response to the breakdown of Safavid authority in the early eighteenth century, and on the detrimental impact the Afghan raids had on the psyche of the local population. The collection of memoirs is thus a welcome addition to the group of sources that will be used in the analysis of the activities of the Abdālī in the years prior to the formation of the Durrānī polity.

⁷⁸ Bihbahānī, *Badāyiʿ al-akhbār*, 125–27.

⁷⁹ For a detailed assessment of the manuscript and its contents, see Javad Abbasi, ed., “Report of Dread: Diaries on the Situation in Southern Khorāsān at the Time of the Fall of the Safavid Dynasty,” in *Mediaeval and Modern Iranian Studies: Proceedings of the 6th European Conference of Iranian Studies, Held in Vienna, 18–22 September 2007 by the Societas Iranologica Europaea*, ed. Maria Szuppe, Anna Krasnowolska, and Claus V. Pedersen (Paris: Association pour l’Avancement des Études Iraniennes, 2011), 1–19; also see Bihbahānī, *Badāyiʿ al-akhbār*, xlv–xlv. An earlier reference to the manuscript can be found in Sefatgol, “Persian Historical Writing under the Last Safavids,” 328–29.

The Mashhad manuscript containing these memoirs is available in at least two recent publications. Saʿīd Mīr Muḥammad Ṣādiq published the manuscript as the fourth appendix to his edition of the *Badāyiʿ al-akhbār* (2010).⁸⁰ Javad Abbasi’s edition of the same manuscript was published in a 2011 article.⁸¹ References are made to Abbasi’s edition of the memoirs, which includes a useful introduction and notes.

⁸⁰ Bihbahānī, *Badāyiʿ al-akhbār*, 113–24.

⁸¹ Javad Abbasi identifies the manuscript as follows: *Yāddāshthā rājiʿ bi-ḥamla-i Afghān bi-sarḥadd-i Īrān*, MS, Mashhad, Kitābkhāna-i Āstān-i Quds-i Rażawī, 4294 (no. 319). The full edited version of the Persian text can be found in Abbasi, “Report of Dread,” 20–32.

1.2: Overview of Sources on the Durrānī Era

As one might expect, information about the Abdālī-Durrānī is more plentiful in sources composed in the reign of Aḥmad Shāh and beyond. While drawing on the aforesaid pre-Durrānī sources, for important developments that took place in the reign of Aḥmad Shāh, this dissertation relies largely on sources produced in Durrānī political settings (Sadōzay but also Bārakzay), many of which are neglected even though they offer the most comprehensive and reliable data available concerning affairs of note related to the royal court, such as civilian and military offices of the Durrānī patrimonial-bureaucratic state, the principal office holders, the dates of important events such as battles, etc.

Sources produced in and around court settings pose a unique set of problems, including their tendency to focus primarily on stately or courtly affairs, often to the exclusion of the societies over which the state governs. To offset the biases inherent in many of the documents of the Durrānī court, where possible they will be read alongside other contemporary sources like chronicles, local histories, travelogues, and archival records written by authors active in Iran, Transoxania, and India who had knowledge (albeit to differing degrees) of the affairs of Aḥmad Shāh but were not part of the patronage network emanating from the Durrānī court.

1.2.1: Sources Produced at the Durrānī Court

Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī by Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī

The most important source on the Durrānī polity is the *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī* (The history of Aḥmad Shāh) (*TASh* in notes), a court-commissioned history written in Persian by the secretary (*munshī*) Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī for his royal patron Aḥmad Shāh Durrānī.⁸²

Very little information has survived about Ḥusaynī beyond what can be gleaned from the *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*. In the introduction to the work, the author gives his full name as Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī al-Munshī ibn Ibrāhīm al-Jāmī.⁸³ The *nisba* al-Jāmī indicates Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī's family was connected to the town of Jām or Turbat-i Jām, the birthplace of the celebrated Persian mystical poet Shaykh Aḥmad-i Jām (d. 536/1141) and of the renowned Timurid-era intellectual, Nūr al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Raḥman Jāmī (d. 898/1492).⁸⁴

Several authors have read Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī's *laqab* as “al-Muṣannā” or “the second,” but the correct rendering is undoubtedly al-Munshī, which refers to his profession as a secretary (*munshī*) in the Durrānī chancery (*dār al-inshā’*).⁸⁵ The author describes himself as having been one of the *munshīs* in the chancery during Nādir's reign (*az munshiyān-i ayyām-i Nādir Shāh*) and an acquaintance of Mahdī Khān Astarābādī. We also know that he

⁸² For further details on the *TASh*, see Storey, *Persian Literature*, 1:395–96; and Stori, *Persidskaia literatura*, trans. and rev. Bregel, 2:1215–16.

⁸³ See Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, ed. Murādōf, 1:7b.

⁸⁴ Murādōf states that the author was from a Jām located near Shiraz, but this view is unconvincing; see Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, ed. Murādōf, 1:81.

⁸⁵ The appellation al-Muṣannā (Arabic: al-Muthannā) is a scribal error on the part of the writer who penned the manuscript of the *TASh* that is currently held in the British Library under the shelfmark Or. 196; see Rieu, *Catalogue of the Persian Manuscripts*, 1:213b–14a. Although Rieu initially recorded the incorrect *laqab* al-Muṣannā, he later recorded the corrected *laqab* “al-Munshī” in volume three of his catalogue (pp. 1054a, 1082b). Despite Rieu's correction, later authors who relied on the first volume of his work continued to read the author's *laqab* as al-Muṣannā. For examples, see Mann, “Quellenstudien zur Geschichte des Aḥmed Šāh Durrānī,” 98–99, 163, 172, 186n; and Singh, *Aḥmad Shah Durrani*, 416, 430.

was later attached to the court of Nādir's grandson, Shāhrukh, in Mashhad.⁸⁶ In his account of how he entered Aḥmad Shāh's service, the author states that Muḥammad Taqī Khān Shīrāzī, another official formerly in the service of Nādir Shāh, found employment with Aḥmad Shāh and was commissioned to locate an experienced secretary who would compose a history modeled on the *Tārīkh-i Nādirī* of Mahdī Khān. During Aḥmad Shāh's Mashhad campaign in 1167/1754–55, Taqī Khān crossed paths with his old acquaintance Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī. Aware of his experience as a trained *munshī*, Taqī Khān recommended Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī as the ideal candidate to write Aḥmad Shāh's history. After an interview with the ruler and his advisors, Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī was admitted into the Durrānī chancery where he attained the rank of Head Secretary (*munshī bāshī*).⁸⁷ In this capacity, he was responsible for composing various court documents, including royal decrees and letters.⁸⁸

No concrete evidence has yet surfaced regarding the date of Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī's death, though it likely occurred soon after the completion of the *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, which concludes with an account of the events of 1186/1772—the year of Aḥmad Shāh's death. The elegy dedicated to the ruler that comprises the final lines of the *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī* was written by the author's son, Muḥammad Ismā'īl, in 1190/1776–77.⁸⁹ According to Murādōf,

⁸⁶ In his description of the deposition of Shāhrukh in Mashhad at the hands of the “*amīrs* of Khurasan,” the author describes himself as having been “among the devotees of the shah [i.e., Shāhrukh]” (*az jumla-i hawā-khwāhān-i shāh*) at the time. See Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, ed. Murādōf, 1:89a.

⁸⁷ For the author's own account of how he became a *munshī* at the Durrānī court, see Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, ed. Murādōf, 1:7b–11a.

⁸⁸ Examples of court documents bearing al-Ḥusaynī's seal are given in Wakīlī Pōpalza'i, *Timūr Shāh Durrānī*, 2:422, 2:711.

⁸⁹ In line 55 of the elegy, Muḥammad Ismā'īl writes that Aḥmad Shāh's mausoleum in Qandahar was completed in 1190/1776–77 (*dar hazār wa yak-ṣad wa tis'in hijrī tamām shud*). On this basis, Murādōf considers 1190 to be the date of the *TASH*'s completion; see Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, ed. Murādōf, 1:76, 2:643a.

Muḥammad Ismāʿīl wrote the elegy in his father's stead perhaps because the latter had died soon after Aḥmad Shāh.⁹⁰

Unlike the many other sources written on Aḥmad Shāh Durrānī, the *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī* is among the few contemporary sources that is based mainly on firsthand accounts and that covers the entirety of Aḥmad Shāh's reign (1160–86/1747–72). As indicated earlier, Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī entered the Durrānī chancery in 1167/1754–55, roughly eight years into Aḥmad Shāh's reign. The author claims to have relied on the accounts of individuals with intimate knowledge of matters that took place prior to his entering the monarch's service. For events that occurred after he joined the Durrānī court, the author claims to have provided eyewitness accounts and relied on informants present at the royal court, including Shāh Walī Khān Bāmīzay, who served as grand *wazīr* to Aḥmad Shāh and whom the latter awarded the title *ashraf al-wuzarāʾ* (lit., “the most eminent of the *wazīrs*”). As a high-ranking official within the Durrānī secretariat, Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī also had access to official court documents from which to draw upon for his history. For these and other reasons, the *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī* may safely be regarded as the most informative source on Aḥmad Shāh's reign.

However, the *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī* is not devoid of shortcomings. Like many Persian dynastic chronicles written in premodern times, Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī's history employs a complex annalistic structure based on the inharmonious *Turkī* lunisolar and *Hijrī* lunar calendric systems. Ascertaining dates of events thus requires diligence on the researcher's part in reconciling the two calendric systems. There is also the problem of partisanship, especially pronounced in court-commissioned chronicles. In the case of the *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī often offers an unbalanced narrative of events in favour of Aḥmad Shāh and focuses almost exclusively on affairs related to the royal court.

⁹⁰ Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, ed. Murādōf, 1:81–83.

Fortunately, there do exist other contemporary sources written by authors not attached to the Durrānī court. Although these authors naturally have biases of their own, their works are useful in corroborating and complementing the *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*.

Many editions of the *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī* have been published since the discovery of the Saint Petersburg manuscript in the mid-twentieth century. In this dissertation references are to the facsimile edition of the Saint Petersburg manuscript, which was published in Moscow in 1974 with a detailed introduction and indices by Dōstmurād Sayyid Murādōf.

Shāhnāma-i Aḥmadī by Niẓām al-Dīn “Ishrat” Siyālkōtī

The *Shāhnāma-i Aḥmadī* is a versified account of Aḥmad Shāh’s reign composed by Niẓām al-Dīn, a native of Siyālkōt who wrote under the penname “Ishrat.” The author was first commissioned to compose an epic poem commemorating Nādir Shāh’s invasion of India in 1151–52/1738–39. This work, entitled *Shāhnāma-i Nādirī*, was apparently completed shortly after Nādir’s assassination in 1162/1748–49.⁹¹ The author was left temporarily without a patron but found a new one in the person of Aḥmad Shāh, who assumed control over the eastern territories of Nādir’s empire. Niẓām al-Dīn joined Aḥmad Shāh at Kabul—presumably at some point after the Durrānī campaign in India in 1170/1757—where he was granted an audience with the ruler and commissioned to compose a poetic account of the latter’s feats in India.⁹² To this end the author obtained paper (*kāghaz*) from the court

⁹¹ The chronogram indicating the year of composition—*bi-bīn bāgh-i man*—can be found in Niẓām al-Dīn “Ishrat” Siyālkōtī, *Shāhnāma-i Aḥmadī*, MS, British Library, Add. 26,285, fol. 127b; see also Rieu, *Catalogue of the Persian Manuscripts*, 2:717b.

⁹² Singh asserts that Niẓām al-Dīn joined Aḥmad Shāh on his march from India to Kabul in 1757, though he does not cite the *Shāhnāma-i Aḥmadī* itself in support of this claim. See Singh, *Ahmad Shah Durrani*, 415.

secretary Mīrzā Maḥmūd—presumably the author of the *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*—before being permitted to return to Siyālkōt to commence work on the project.⁹³

That Niẓām al-Dīn obtained materials for his poem in the late 1750s demonstrates that the *Shāhnāma-i Aḥmadī*'s accounts of the early years of Aḥmad Shāh's reign were written retrospectively. Nevertheless, the author was well suited to compose this account since his hometown of Siyālkōt is located just northeast of Lahore which became the site of intense conflict between the Durrānī and their rivals from the beginning of Aḥmad Shāh's reign.⁹⁴ From his writing we know that Niẓām al-Dīn was closely connected to the Durrānī court; for example, at the beginning of his account he notes that he obtained information from Aḥmad Shāh's intimate companions, including 'Abd al-Raḥmān Sadōzay.⁹⁵ The author was also in contact with the nephew of Aḥmad Shāh's grand *wazīr* Shāh Walī Khān, Nūr al-Dīn Khān Bāmīzay, and, in 1175/1762, accompanied the latter on his expedition to Kashmir where he served in an official capacity as the head of the revenue assessors (*amīn al-mulk*) for the local Durrānī regime.⁹⁶ The fate of the author after this point is not known, nor is the exact date when the *Shāhnāma-i Aḥmadī* was completed. But the fact that the concluding section includes a description of the succession dispute that emerged between the Durrānī princes Tīmūr and Sulaymān after Aḥmad Shāh's death indicates it was completed at some point after 1186/1772–73.⁹⁷

⁹³ Siyālkōtī, *Shāhnāma-i Aḥmadī*, fols. 281b–88a.

⁹⁴ For an analysis of Aḥmad Shāh's activities in Lahore between the years 1747 and 1752, see Singh, *Ahmad Shah Durrani*, 41–49, 67–78, 106–24.

⁹⁵ Siyālkōtī, *Shāhnāma-i Aḥmadī*, fol. 133a.

⁹⁶ Siyālkōtī, *Shāhnāma-i Aḥmadī*, fols. 397b–99b. For the function of *amīns* in contemporary north Indian polities, see M. Athar Ali, *The Apparatus of Empire: Awards of Ranks, Offices, and Titles to the Mughal Nobility, 1574–1658* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), xxv; and Muzaffar Alam, *The Crisis of Empire in Mughal North India: Awadh and the Punjab, 1707–1748* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1986), 192–93.

⁹⁷ Farhang, *Afghānistān dar panj qarn-i akhīr*, 145.

Singh critiques Niẓām al-Dīn’s *Shāhnāma-i Aḥmadī* for its ornateness and its tendency to embellish the feats and credentials of Aḥmad Shāh. To these criticisms one might add that the *Shāhnāma-i Aḥmadī* focuses primarily on India and its accounts of the final years of Aḥmad Shāh’s rule are, unfortunately, lacunose. Notwithstanding its limitations, the *Shāhnāma-i Aḥmadī* is an informative primary source on the early Durrānī period and is perhaps paralleled only by Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī’s *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī* in terms of the level of detail it provides of Aḥmad Shāh’s activities, particularly in India.

This thesis will rely on the British Library’s manuscript of the *Shāhnāma-i Aḥmadī*. The manuscript, which comprises 421 folios with 19 lines of poetry per page, contains two separate works composed by Niẓām al-Dīn: the *Shāhnāma-i Nādirī*, which spans fols. 1–130a; and the *Shāhnāma-i Aḥmadī*, which spans fols. 130b–421a.⁹⁸ The *Shāhnāma-i Aḥmadī* is divided into approximately 117 sections of varying length and each has a separate heading.⁹⁹ Excepting fols. 418a–21a, which are partially or wholly damaged, the manuscript is in good condition and its *nasta‘līq* script is for the most part legible.

⁹⁸ Further details about the British Library manuscript can be found in Rieu, *Catalogue of the Persian Manuscripts*, 2:717a–718a; Storey, *Persian Literature*, 1:328, 1:397; and Stori, *Persidskaia literatura*, trans. and rev. Bregel, 2:1219. Singh notes that another copy of the manuscript is preserved in the Asafiya Library of Hyderabad, which he arranged to be transcribed and stored in the Khalsa College at Amritsar. This Amritsar copy was used for his study of Aḥmad Shāh; see Singh, *Ahmad Shah Durrani*, 415–16.

⁹⁹ Singh notes that the copy he consulted was 614 pages and divided into 115 “chapters”; Singh, *Ahmad Shah Durrani*, 415. In the British Library manuscript, the approximately 117 sections of the *Shāhnāma-i Aḥmadī* are separated by headings found at the beginning of each section. It may be noted that some of the headings are empty (e.g., fols. 135b, 141b, 163a, 163b, 187b, 316b, 321b, 416b, 419b) while certain verses of poetry are either partially or fully unfinished (e.g., fols. 321a, 324a–32b, 354a–59a, 421a–21b). These unfinished parts, though few and far between, indicate that the British Library manuscript is not entirely complete.

Aḥmad Shāh's letter to the Ottoman ruler Sultān Muṣṭafā III

An important historical document on the reign of Aḥmad Shāh is the letter (*nāma*) he sent to the Ottoman court in Istanbul.¹⁰⁰ The letter itself does not bear a date of composition but does indicate that it was composed on Aḥmad Shāh's return journey to the imperial capital (*maqarr-i salṭanat*) of Qandahar after the Battle of Panipat in 1174/1761.¹⁰¹ From the commentary on the letter currently located in the Ottoman archives in Istanbul, which is dated 7 Jumādā I 1176/24 November 1762, we also know that the letter was sent with an ambassadorial mission to the then Ottoman province of Baghdad and destined for the court of Sultān Muṣṭafā III (r. 1171-87/1757-74).¹⁰²

The letter begins by praising God and the Prophet and then gives an account of Aḥmad Shāh's accession in Qandahar following the death of Nādir Shāh, his military exploits in India, Khurasan, and Turkistan, and his relations with the local powers of these lands. This section of the letter reads like a *ẓafar-nāma* (victory-proclamation) in that it celebrates Aḥmad Shāh's many military triumphs culminating in his decisive victory over the Marathas at Panipat. The main object of the letter was twofold. First, Aḥmad Shāh's call for Durrānī-Ottoman cooperation in subduing the "seditious Qizilbash vagabonds of Iran" (*sarkashān-i awbāsh-i Qizilbāsh-i Īrān*) who threatened the western territories of the Durrānī realm. Second, Aḥmad Shāh's request of permission from Sultān Muṣṭafā III to build a mosque

¹⁰⁰ Ghulām Jaylānī Jalālī, *Nāma-i Aḥmad Shāh Bābā bi-nām-i Sultān Muṣṭafā ṣālīṣ-i 'Uṣmānī ki az rū-yi nuskha-i wāḥid-i khaṭṭī-i ārshīf-i salṭanatī-i Istanbul tartīb shuda ast* (Kabul: Anjuman-i Tārīkh-i Afghānistān, 1346 H.sh./1967). Aspects of the letter have been discussed in Gommans, *The Rise of the Indo-Afghan Empire*, 49–54; and Tucker, *Nadir Shah's Quest for Legitimacy*, 108–9.

¹⁰¹ Jalālī, *Nāma-i Aḥmad Shāh Bābā*, bāʔ, 77–78.

¹⁰² For a detailed analysis of the letter in Turkish, see Hikmet Bayur, "Nadir Şah Afşar'ın ölümünden sonra Osmanlı Devletini İran'ı istilâya kıskırtmak için yapılan iki deneme," *Belleten* 12, no. 46 (1948): 411–63. Bayur's article includes a facsimile of a copy of the letter that was preserved by the Ottoman chancery.

(*masjid*) near the shrine of the Prophet in Medina as a gesture of goodwill.¹⁰³ In his response letter, dated to the middle of Jumādā II 1176/December 1762–January 1763, Sulṭān Muṣṭafā III indicated his intention to honour the peace agreements reached with previous rulers of Iran (i.e., Safavids and Nādir Shāh) rather than attack the country.¹⁰⁴ The Ottoman response letter also suggested that Medina already had many places of worship but that the governor of Baghdad would be consulted about the prospect of building another mosque.¹⁰⁵

The letter contains plenty of useful historical data. In addition to casting light on Durrānī-Ottoman relations and Aḥmad Shāh's early expeditions, it gives insight into early Durrānī concepts of royal legitimacy. It depicts Aḥmad Shāh as one in a long line of Afghan kings, namely, the rulers of the Indo-Afghan Lōdī and Sūrī dynasties, whose rule was sanctioned by divine Decree—a factor that enabled him to achieve success on the battlefield and establish order at a time when the ineffective rule of the Safavids and the Mughals created chaotic conditions in Iran and India.¹⁰⁶ The letter's emphasis on the military successes of Aḥmad Shāh was designed to bolster his authority and depict him as being on a par with Sulṭān Muṣṭafā III, who is referred to as his “brother.”¹⁰⁷ In this way, the letter outlines the strategies of legitimation that Aḥmad Shāh employed as well as Durrānī foreign diplomacy more generally—topics that remain understudied.

¹⁰³ Jalālī, *Nāma-i Aḥmad Shāh Bābā*, 77–79. The Iranian rebels in question were the various *amīrs* who refused to accept Aḥmad Shāh's suzerainty and who threatened the western borders of the Durrānī domain, particularly Herat and its neighbouring lands.

¹⁰⁴ The most recent and therefore relevant of the peace treaties was the Treaty of Kurdan of 1746 between Nādir Shāh and the Ottomans, for which see Tucker, *Nadir Shah's Quest for Legitimacy*, 97–99 *passim*.

¹⁰⁵ Bayur, “Nadir Şah Afşar'ın,” 415–16, 463–69.

¹⁰⁶ Jalālī, *Nāma-i Aḥmad Shāh Bābā*, 14–15.

¹⁰⁷ Jalālī, *Nāma-i Aḥmad Shāh Bābā*, 6.

References are to Ghulām Jaylānī Jalālī's critical edition of the letter, which includes notes, appendices, and indices.¹⁰⁸

Sharḥ-i Rukn al-yaqīn by Muhammad Ghaws ibn Turkmān

The *Rukn al-yaqīn* (The pillar of divine Certitude) is a mystical and lettrist treatise composed in Persian by Aḥmad Shāh Durrānī himself. The work is known mainly through a manuscript copy of a commentary on it referred to as *Sharḥ-i Rukn al-yaqīn* (Commentary on the pillar of divine Certitude).¹⁰⁹ The commentary was composed by Muḥammad Ghaws ibn Turkmān ibn Tāj Khān who states that he was appointed to the posts of Mullā bāshī and Khān-i 'ulūm by Aḥmad Shāh.¹¹⁰ Muḥammad Ghaws belonged to a family residing in the district of Ghwāra Margha, located east of Qandahar, that migrated to Peshawar in the reign of the Mughal emperor Awrangzīb, also known as 'Ālamgīr I (r. 1068–1118/1658–1707).¹¹¹ Under Aḥmad Shāh, Muḥammad Ghaws served as judge or *qāzī* of Peshawar, in and around which region many of his descendants, known as Qāzī-khēl (lit., “descendants of the judge”),

¹⁰⁸ While on a research trip to Kabul in the mid-1960s, Alexandre Bennigsen (d. 1988), a scholar of Islam in the Soviet Union, informed members of the Historical Society of Afghanistan (*Anjuman-i Tārīkh-i Afghānistān*) of the existence of Aḥmad Shāh's letter to Sulṭān Muṣṭafā III in the archives of the Topkapı Palace in Istanbul. He later supplied the Society with a rotograph containing photos of the letter, which formed the basis of Ghulām Jaylānī Jalālī's critical edition. See Jalālī, *Nāma-i Aḥmad Shāh Bābā, dū*.

¹⁰⁹ Muḥammad Ghaws ibn Turkmān ibn Tāj Khān, *Sharḥ-i Rukn al-yaqīn*, MS, British Library, I.O. Islamic 2714. For a description of the manuscript, see Ethé, *Catalogue of Persian Manuscripts*, 1:1585–86; and D. N. Marshall, *The Afghans in India under the Delhi Sultanate and Mughal Empire: A Survey of Relevant Manuscripts*, Occasional Paper no. 10 (New York: Afghanistan Council of the Asia Society, 1976), 14.

¹¹⁰ Muḥammad Ghaws, *Sharḥ-i Rukn al-yaqīn*, fols. 4a–5b.

¹¹¹ For details on the locale of Ghwāra Margha, see Henry George Raverty, *Notes on Afghanistan and Baluchistan* (London, 1880; rev. ed., 1888; repr., Lahore: Sang-e-Meel, 2001), 66n, 540n, appendix: 53; Elphinstone, *An Account of the Kingdom of Caubul*, 430–31; and Ludwig W. Adamec, ed., *Historical and Political Gazetteer of Afghanistan*, 6 vols. (Graz: Akademische Druck-und Verlagsanstalt, 1972–85), 5:172.

have since resided.¹¹² According to the statements of contemporary scholars in Afghanistan with knowledge of some of the author's other writings, Muḥammad Ghawṣ also translated and wrote commentaries on other works attributed to Aḥmad Shāh.¹¹³

The date of completion of Muḥammad Ghawṣ's commentary is not indicated within the body of the text. However a note scribbled in the margins of the manuscript refers to the editor (*muṣaḥḥiḥ*) of the commentary, a scribe by the name of Ḥāfiẓ Muḥammad Sa'īd Muftī Lāhōrī; to the work's commentator (*mushārīḥa-i Rukn al-yaqīn*), the Khān-i 'ulūm (i.e., Muḥammad Ghawṣ); and a date of composition between Sha'bān and 2 Ramaḍān 1165/June and 14 July 1752.¹¹⁴ That the scribe was a native of Lahore suggests the manuscript was composed in that city, though Peshawar should not be discounted since it is the city in which Muḥammad Ghawṣ was based. From the commentary's date of composition of 1165/1752 we may conclude that the *Rukn al-yaqīn* was initially composed prior to this date.

The *Rukn al-yaqīn* consists of a preface, introduction, and the main body of the text. The preface (fols. 1b–9a) begins by praising God, the Prophet Muḥammad, and the royal author. In this section Muḥammad Ghawṣ indicates that Aḥmad Shāh entered the spiritual realm, received divine inspiration, and then endeavored to express his experience in writing (fols. 5b–6a). As he attained the epistemic level of *ḥaqq al-yaqīn*, or divine Certitude, which is

¹¹² For further details on the activities of Muḥammad Ghawṣ's descendants in Peshawar and neighbouring lands, see Charles Francis Massy, *Chiefs and Families of Note in the Delhi, Jalandhar, Peshawar and Derajat Divisions of the Panjab* (Allahabad, 1890), 459–62.

¹¹³ Faqīr Allāh Jalālābādī, *Guzida'i az maktūbāt-i Miyā Faqīr Allāh Jalālābādī*, trans. 'Abd Allāh Samandar Ghūriyānī (Kabul: 'Irfān, 1359 H.sh./1981), xiii; and Ḥusayn Barzigar, "Muḥammad Ghawṣ," in Ḥasan Anūsha, ed., *Dānishnāma-i adab-i fārsī*, vol. 3, *Adab-i fārsī dar Afghānistān* (Tehran: Wizārat-i Farhang wa Irshād-i Islāmī, 1378 H.sh./1999), 900–1. Another known writing attributed to Muḥammad Ghawṣ is a gloss on a gloss (*al-ḥāshiya 'alā al-ḥāshiya*) on the *Umūr al-āmma* of Mīr Muḥammad Zāhid b. Muḥammad Aslam al-Harawī (d. 1101/1689–90); see Abdul Nabi Kaukab, comp., *Handlist of Arabic Manuscripts in the Punjab University Library*, rev. Syed Jamil Ahmad Rizvi (Lahore: University of the Punjab, 1982), 188–89.

¹¹⁴ Muḥammad Ghawṣ, *Sharḥ-i Rukn al-yaqīn*, fol. 434a.

the loftiest of the levels of Witnessing (*muntahā-i ṭabaqāt-i shuhūd*) and the foremost of the ranks of Certitude (*ghāya-i darajāt-i yaqīn*), he named his composition *Rukn al-yaqīn*.¹¹⁵ These statements suggest that the *Rukn al-yaqīn* relates to Aḥmad Shāh's own mystical experiences and quest for gnosis. The preface concludes with a panegyric poem dedicated to the ruler, who is likened to the wise and just kings of ancient Iran.

The introduction (fols. 9b–15a) offers a technical overview of the main principles of Sufi metaphysics, knowledge of which is necessary to understand the esoteric meaning of the *Rukn al-yaqīn* as well as Muḥammad Ghawṣ's detailed commentary on it. The main body of the work (fols. 15b–434b) consists of passages from the original work composed by Aḥmad Shāh, which is referred to as a "book" (*kitāb*).¹¹⁶ Muḥammad Ghawṣ notes that the commentaries on the book, which appear after each passage of the original text, have been called *ʿAyn al-yaqīn (sharḥ-i ān musammā bi ʿAyn al-yaqīn)*, which refers to the second highest epistemic level.¹¹⁷ Passages from Aḥmad Shāh's work are introduced with the Arabic formula *qāla al-muṣannif khalladu Allāhu taʿālā mulkahu* ("So says the author, may God the Exalted prolong his reign"), and are to be distinguished from the commentaries of Muḥammad Ghawṣ, which are introduced with the Arabic formula *qāla al-shāriḥ ʿafā Allāhu taʿālā ʿanhu* ("So says the commentator, may God the Exalted have mercy on him").

The first part (fols. 15b–88a) of the main body of the text-commentary consists of opening statements of an esoteric bent, interspersed with lettrist (*ʿilm al-ḥurūf*) elements (see, e.g., fols. 15b, 23a, 27b, 30b, 32a, 35a). This is followed by a series of prayers (*munājāt*) composed by Aḥmad Shāh, which end with the formula *faryād-ras yā Muṣṭafā* or "grant

¹¹⁵ Muḥammad Ghawṣ, *Sharḥ-i Rukn al-yaqīn*, fol. 6a.

¹¹⁶ The statement reads: *ism-i kitāb-rā Rukn al-yaqīn guzāštīm*; see Muḥammad Ghawṣ, *Sharḥ-i Rukn al-yaqīn*, fols. 6a, 434a.

¹¹⁷ Muḥammad Ghawṣ, *Sharḥ-i Rukn al-yaqīn*, fol. 6a. The title *ʿAyn al-yaqīn* seems to have been used as a way to distinguish the commentary from the original text of the *Rukn al-yaqīn*.

assistance, o Chosen One” (fols. 37b–88a). The second part (fols. 88a–434a) is an allegorical tale (*hikāyat*) in the form of dialogue between three figures: Pādshāh (King), Jān-i Jahān (Soul of the World), and Pādshāh’s daughter, Rayḥāna (Sweet Basil). The dialogue between Pādshāh and Jān-i Jahān comprises folios 88a–295b, while the dialogue between Rayḥāna and Jān-i Jahān comprises folios 295b–434a.

Regarding the purpose of his composition, Aḥmad Shāh states that he composed the book “so that the People of the Heart (i.e., Sufis) may find benefit from its inner meanings (*tā ahl-i dīl bi-ma‘ānī-i ān intifā‘ yāband*).”¹¹⁸ As discussed further in Chapter 6 of this dissertation, Aḥmad Shāh was a devoted Sufi closely affiliated with the Mujaddidī-Naqshbandī Order. He also composed an anthology (*dīwān*) of poetry, predominantly in Pashto but with some verses in Persian, that is mystical in nature. *Rukn al-yaqīn* confirms that he was also interested in esoteric subjects, including the occult science of letters. While lacking in explicitly “historical” data, the text does yield valuable insights into the prevalent intellectual currents that informed Aḥmad Shāh’s spiritual worldview.

The *Rukn al-yaqīn* is a rare work that has never been studied in detail or even taken into consideration in any of the major studies dedicated to Aḥmad Shāh. Needless to say, an in-depth analysis is much needed to better understand Aḥmad Shāh’s theosophical outlook. Such a detailed analysis is beyond the scope of this dissertation, which will limit itself to considering how the treatise contributes to our understanding of Aḥmad Shāh’s views on the relationship between religion and kingship.

¹¹⁸ Muḥammad Ghawṣ, *Sharḥ-i Rukn al-yaqīn*, fol. 91a.

1.2.2: Contemporary Iranian Sources

Mujmal al-tawārīkh baʿd-i Nādiriyya by Abū al-Ḥasan Gulistāna

Abū al-Ḥasan b. Muḥammad Amīn, the author of the *Mujmal al-tawārīkh baʿd-i Nādiriyya* (The compendium of histories following the Nādirid age) (henceforth *Mujmal al-tawārīkh*; MTbN in notes), belonged to a family of Gulistāna sayyids originally from Isfahan. After the collapse of the Safavid state, a number of Gulistāna sayyids, including members of the author's family, entered the service of Nādir Shāh. His eldest brother, Mīr Murtaẓā Khān, and his uncle, Mīr Muḥammad Ishāq, served Nādir in different official capacities but later moved to the city of Murshidābād in Bengal on account of a dispute with him.

Abū al-Ḥasan and two of his brothers entered the service of another uncle, Mīrzā Muḥammad Taqī, who held various positions in the Nādirid administration in western Iran, including the governorship of Kirmānshāhān. In the turbulent period that followed Nādir's assassination, Muḥammad Taqī found himself at the forefront of an ongoing power struggle between rival political actors vying for control over Kirmānshāhān's citadel. In the early 1750s, Abū al-Ḥasan represented his uncle to negotiate the capitulation of the citadel to Karīm Khān Zand. After Muḥammad Taqī again surrendered the citadel to Karīm Khān's rival, Āzād Khān "Afghan," a local Kurdish rebellion broke out in the course of which Muḥammad Taqī was killed. At the time of his uncle's death, Abū al-Ḥasan had been on a pilgrimage to the sacred shrine cities (ʿatabāt) of Iraq. There, he met up with his two brothers who informed him of Muḥammad Taqī's death. In 1169/1756, the three siblings moved to Murshidābād to take up residence with their exiled relatives. Abū al-Ḥasan likely remained in Bengal until his death, which took place at an unknown date.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁹ For further biographical information on the author, see Abū al-Ḥasan ibn Muḥammad Amīn Gulistāna, *Mujmal al-tawārīkh*, ed. Muḥammad Taqī Mudarris-Raẓawī (Tehran: Ibn-i Sīnā, 1320 H.sh./1941; 2nd ed., 1344/1965), viii–xvii, 1–6, 31, 139, 177–79, 231–33, 264–65, 311–13; John R. Perry, *Karīm Khan Zand: A History of*

The *Mujmal al-tawārīkh* is Abū al-Ḥasan's only known composition. It was begun at the request of his brother, Sayyid Muḥammad Khān, in 1195/1781 and was completed in the middle of 1196/1782.¹²⁰ The work covers the twenty-five year period between Nādir Shāh's death in 1160/1747 and the work's completion in 1196/1782. Regarding his sources, the author claims to have relied on eyewitness accounts of events during his residency in Iran, or otherwise on second-hand reports and personal letters he had at his disposal. It is evident that he also made extensive use of contemporary sources like Mahdī Khān's *Tārīkh-i Nādirī*, and perhaps gathered information from the Mar'ashī sayyids, another Iranian émigré family residing in Murshidābād (see below). The author's account of events taking place after his migration was based largely on knowledge received from Indian interlocutors. As a result, some of the narratives of events after 1169/1756 are at times confused, although other sections of the work are more accurate.

The *Mujmal al-tawārīkh* is one of the principal primary sources on the history of Iran in the post-Nādirid era. It contains an account of Aḥmad Shāh from the perspective of a contemporary Iranian émigré to Bengal. Unlike the *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, the *Mujmal al-tawārīkh* was not produced in a court setting, nor was it dependent on royal patronage. Gulistāna wrote in a clear style and his account of Aḥmad Shāh is devoid of the embellishments found in Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī's *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*. As such, the *Mujmal al-tawārīkh* is a useful source with which to compare and contrast the contents of the *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, particularly when analyzing Aḥmad Shāh's activities in Khurasan and, to a lesser extent, India. At the same time, the author was writing from a more distant vantage

Iran, 1747-1779 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 305-6; and *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. "Abu'l-Ḥasan Golestāna" (by R. D. McChesney).

¹²⁰ Gulistāna, *Mujmal al-tawārīkh*, ed. Mudarris-Raḥawī, xvii-xviii, 4-5.

point. As he was less familiar with affairs taking place in the Durrānī realm, his account of Aḥmad Shāh is not always dependable and should be read with caution.¹²¹

There exist two critical editions of the *Mujmal al-tawārikh*. The first is Oskar Mann's edition of extracts from the manuscript in the State Library in Berlin, which was published in Leiden in two volumes between 1891 and 1896.¹²² The second is the edition by Muḥammad Taqī Mudarris-Raḥawī published in Tehran in 1941, which is based upon Oskar Mann's edition of the extracts as well as on a complete manuscript of the work in Iran.¹²³ Mudarris-Raḥawī's second edition, published in 1965, has been used in this dissertation.

Supplement and Notes to the *Mujmal al-tawārikh* by Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn Kūhmarraʿī

The Iranian manuscript utilized by Mudarris-Raḥawī for his critical edition of the *Mujmal al-tawārikh*, which had been in the private collection of a certain Muʿayyad Ṣābitī, contains a useful supplement (*ẓayl wa ḥāshiya*) to Abū al-Ḥasan's history, written by Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn Kūhmarraʿī, nicknamed "Amīr Khān." The latter came across a copy of the *Mujmal al-tawārikh* in 1200/1785–86 and judged that many of the events described by Abū al-Ḥasan, especially those that took place following his migration to India, were inaccurate and in need of revision. As Kūhmarraʿī and his ancestors were tied to the Zand court and had direct knowledge of many of the affairs described in the *Mujmal al-tawārikh*, he set out to compose

¹²¹ As an example, Gulistāna writes that Aḥmad Shāh's father Zamān Khān was killed by Zū al-Faqār Khān (i.e., Aḥmad's brother and Zamān's own son!), though this is clearly incorrect. See Gulistāna, *Mujmal al-tawārikh*, ed. Mudarris-Raḥawī, 58–60. In general, however, the author's accounts of events taking place during Aḥmad Shāh's reign, which are nearer to the time when he was writing, are more reliable.

¹²² Abū al-Ḥasan ibn Muḥammad Amīn Gulistāna, *Das Muḥmil et-tāriḫ-i baʿd nadir̄je* [*Mujmal al-tāriḫ-i baʿd-i Nādir̄iyya*], ed. Oskar Mann, 2 vols. (Leiden, 1891–96). For further details on this manuscript of the *MTbN*, see Pertsch, *Verzeichniss der persischen Handschriften*, 428–29.

¹²³ Gulistāna, *Mujmal al-tawārikh*, ed. Mudarris-Raḥawī, xxvii. Mudarris-Raḥawī's editions also include Kūhmarraʿī's Supplement and Notes (*ẓayl wa ḥāshiya*) to the *MTbN*.

his supplement in order to rectify the errors in it (e.g., the date of Karīm Khān's death) and to add relevant data and notes to it. Kūhmarraʿī's supplement brings the *Mujmal al-tawārīkh*'s narrative down to the year 1203/1789 and includes some useful data on Aḥmad Shāh.¹²⁴

Majmaʿ al-tawārīkh by Muḥammad Khalīl Marʿashī

Muḥammad Khalīl (b. 1164/1751) belonged to the aforementioned émigré family of Marʿashī sayyids residing in Murshidābād, Bengal. His father Dawūd Mīrzā (1141–1204/1729–89) was the eldest son of Sayyid Muḥammad (1128–76/1715–63). The latter was the son of Muḥammad Dawūd, a Riḏawī Sayyid who served for a time as *mutawallī* of the ʿAlid shrine in Mashhad, and Shahr-bānū Bēgum, a daughter of the Safavid ruler Shāh Sulaymān I (r. 1077–1105/1666–94).¹²⁵ Nādir Shāh appointed Sayyid Muḥammad as superintendent (*mutawallī*) of the ʿAlid shrine in Mashhad in ca. 1154/1741.¹²⁶ Soon after Nādir's death, on 20 Muḥarram 1163/30 December 1749, the *amīrs* of Khurasan placed Sayyid Muḥammad on the throne at Mashhad and styled him Shāh Sulaymān II on account of his descent from Shāh Sulaymān I.¹²⁷ He ruled briefly but was overthrown by forces loyal to Nādir's grandson Shāhrukh. On 11 Rabīʿ II 1163/20 March 1750, those loyal to Shāhrukh detained Sayyid Muḥammad, had him blinded and his tongue cut out, and then imprisoned him in the fortress (*arg*) of Mashhad.¹²⁸

¹²⁴ Gulistāna, *Mujmal al-tawārīkh*, ed. Mudarris-Raḏawī, xxvi–xxvii, 344; see also Storey, *Persian Literature*, 1:330–31; Stori, *Persidskaia literatura*, trans. and rev. Bregel, 2:931–33; and *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. “Abu’l-Ḥasan Golestāna” (by R. D. McChesney).

¹²⁵ Muḥammad Khalīl Marʿashī, *Majmaʿ al-tawārīkh: Dar tārikh-i inqirāz-i Ṣafawiyya wa waqāyī-i baʿd tā sāl-i 1207 hijrī qamarī*, ed. ʿAbbās Iqbāl (Tehran: Shirkat-i Sāmī Chāp, 1328 H.sh./1949), 91.

¹²⁶ Muḥammad Khalīl indicates that Sayyid Muḥammad was appointed *wallī* at the time of Nādir Shāh's campaign in Daghestan, which was undertaken between 1153–54/1741 and 1155/1743; see Muḥammad Khalīl, *Majmaʿ al-tawārīkh*, 95. For details on the Daghestan campaign, see Lockhart, *Nadir Shah*, 197–211.

¹²⁷ Muḥammad Khalīl, *Majmaʿ al-tawārīkh*, 114. To avoid holding the event during the holy month of Muḥarram, the official coronation was postponed until 5 Ṣafar 1163/14 January 1750.

¹²⁸ Muḥammad Khalīl, *Majmaʿ al-tawārīkh*, 137–38. He remained imprisoned until his death.

After this dreadful ordeal, Sayyid Muḥammad, fearing for his family's safety, secretly sent his sons Dawūd Mīrzā (the author's father) and 'Alī Mīrzā to the shrine cities ('atabāt) of Iraq for sanctuary. Thereafter he arranged for Dawūd Mīrzā to sail to the court of the Mughal emperor. However, on reaching Shāhjahānābād, the turmoil arising from the successive invasions of Aḥmad Shāh Durrānī forced Dawūd to withdraw to Murshidābād where he entered the service of 'Alī Wirdī Khān (d. 1169/1756), also known as Nawāb Mahābat Jang, the *ṣūbadār* of Bengal.¹²⁹ In 1192/1778–79, Dawūd summoned various relatives, including his son Muḥammad Khalīl who was in Isfahan at the time, to Murshidābād.¹³⁰

Muḥammad Khalīl completed the *Majma' al-tawārīkh* (The convergence of histories) (MT in notes) in 1207/1793, only a few years after his father's death. Although several of the events described in the book took place prior to his birth, the author purports to have relied on reliable, contemporary accounts. Among the sources he consulted are Mahdī Khān's *Tārīkh-i Nādirī*, the memoirs (*yāddāshthā*) of his father Dawūd Mīrzā, and the writings (*nuskahā*) of Mīr Muḥammad 'Alī, nicknamed Fāzil, a fellow resident of Murshidābād about whom little is known.

Some of the accounts of events in Iran in *Majma' al-tawārīkh* bear close resemblance to the *Mujmal al-tawārīkh*, which has led to speculation that Muḥammad Khalīl and Abū al-Ḥasan may have been acquainted and made use of similar sources.¹³¹ After all, Abū al-Ḥasan had been a resident of Murshidābād since the 1750s and completed his history in 1196/1782, a few years after Muḥammad Khalīl's migration to the city. Indeed, a rapport may well have existed between the Gulistāna and Mar'ashī sayyid émigré communities of Murshidābād,

¹²⁹ Muḥammad Khalīl, *Majma' al-tawārīkh*, 143. For more information on 'Alī Wirdī Khān, see Kalikinkar Datta, *Alivardi and His Times* (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1939).

¹³⁰ For further details on the work and its author, see Muḥammad Khalīl, *Majma' al-tawārīkh*, *alif-wāw*; Storey, *Persian Literature*, 1:319; and Stori, *Persidskaia literatura*, trans. and rev. Bregel, 2:900–1.

¹³¹ Muḥammad Khalīl, *Majma' al-tawārīkh*, *jīm-dāl*.

and the possibility that Dawūd Mīrzā and/or Mīr Muḥammad ‘Alī served as common sources of information for both authors would help explain the similarities between their histories, including their accounts of Aḥmad Shāh. It is also possible that Muḥammad Khalīl consulted the *Mujmal al-tawārīkh* without referencing it in his history.

The author’s stated objective in writing the *Majma‘ al-tawārīkh* was to compose a history of events between the Ghilzay revolt of 1120/1709 and the time of his own writing in 1207/1793 that had not been fully and honestly recounted in contemporary histories. Though Muḥammad Khalīl purports to offer a more complete account of these events than can be found in works like Mahdī Khān’s *Tārīkh-i Nādirī*, the *Majma‘ al-tawārīkh* is only more detailed in its analysis of events relating directly or indirectly to the author’s grandfather, Sayyid Muḥammad.¹³² The Abdālī fit within the main narrative of the work insofar as they are presented as key adversaries of Sayyid Muḥammad during his brief reign as Shāh Sulaymān II. The *Majma‘ al-tawārīkh* is by no means a trove of data on the activities of the Abdālī, but the few details it does provide—for instance, the summary of the contents of a condescending letter sent by Shāh Sulaymān II’s embassy to “Aḥmad Khān Sadōza’i Afghān”; the accounts of the army dispatched by the ruler to recapture Herat from its Abdālī defenders; and Aḥmad Shāh’s subsequent invasion of Mashhad—contribute to our understanding of Aḥmad Shāh’s relations with the political actors in Khurasan during the formative years of the Durrānī polity.

¹³² In this respect the *MT* is closely related to the *Zabūr-i Āl-i Dawūd*, another important source on Sayyid Muḥammad completed by Muḥammad Khalīl’s uncle Sulṭān Hāshim in 1218/1803–4; see Sulṭān Hāshim Mīrzā, *Zabūr-i Āl-i Dāwūd: Sharḥ-i irtibāt-i sādāt-i Mar‘ashī bā salāṭīn-i Ṣafawiyya*, ed. ‘Abd al-Ḥusayn Nawā’ī (Tehran: Mīrās-i Maktūb, 1379 H.sh./2000). As the *Zabūr* was written after the *MT* and does not add significantly to Muḥammad Khalīl’s accounts of the Abdālī and Aḥmad Shāh, it will not be analyzed in any detail for the purposes of this dissertation.

‘Abbās Iqbāl produced a critical edition of the *Majma‘ al-tawārīkh* that was first published in 1949 and reprinted in 1984. Iqbāl’s edition, which is the only published edition of the *Majma‘ al-tawārīkh*, is utilized in this dissertation.

Zand and Qājār Histories

There exist many Iranian histories written under Zand and Qājār patronage and completed around the time of Aḥmad Shāh’s reign. The main Zand chronicles of the period are the *Tārīkh-i gītī-gushā* by Muḥammad Ṣādiq Nāmī Iṣfahānī (d. 1204/1789–90) and the *Gulshan-i murād* (completed 1210/1796) by Abū al-Ḥasan Ghaffārī Kāshānī.¹³³ The principal chronicle of the early Qājār period is the *Tārīkh-i Muḥammadī* (completed 1211/1796) by Muḥammad Faṭḥ Allāh Sārawī for his patron Āghā Muḥammad Khān Qājār (d. 1211/1797).¹³⁴ Although the Zand and Qājār chronicles focus mainly on happenings in the western lands of Iran, they do occasionally refer to the activities of the Durrānī in Khurasan. Moreover, as Oskar Mann noted, the annalistic structure these histories employ is especially useful for verifying the chronology of Aḥmad Shāh’s activities in the region.¹³⁵

¹³³ Mīrzā Muḥammad Ṣādiq Nāmī-Iṣfahānī, *Tārīkh-i gītī-gushā: Dar tārīkh-i khānadān-i Zand*, rev. ed., ed. Sa‘īd Nafīsī (Tehran: Iqbāl, 1363 H.sh./1984); and Abū al-Ḥasan Ghaffārī-Kāshānī, *Gulshan-i murād*, ed. Ghulām Rizā Ṭabāṭabā‘ī-Majd (Tehran: Zarrīn, 1369 H.sh./1990). For further details of these sources, see Storey, *Persian Literature*, 1:331; Stori, *Persidskaia literatura*, trans. and rev. Bregel, 2:933–37; and Perry, *Karim Khan Zand*, 303–5.

¹³⁴ For more on the *Tārīkh-i Muḥammadī* and its author, see the editor Ṭabāṭabā‘ī-Majd’s preface in Muḥammad Faṭḥ Allāh Sārawī, *Tārīkh-i Muḥammadī: Aḥsan al-tawārīkh*, ed. Ghulām Rizā Ṭabāṭabā‘ī-Majd (Tehran: Amīr Kabīr, 1371 H.sh./1992), 9–16; Storey, *Persian Literature*, 1:332; Stori, *Persidskaia literatura*, trans. and rev. Bregel, 2:940–41; and Tucker, “Persian Historiography in the 18th and Early 19th Century,” 274–80.

¹³⁵ Mann, “Quellenstudien zur Geschichte des Aḥmed Šāh Durrānī,” 115–17.

1.2.3: Contemporary Indian Sources

Siyar al-muta'akhhirīn by Ghulām Husayn Khān Tabāṭabā'ī

Ghulām Ḥusayn Khān Ṭabāṭabā'ī was born in Shāhjahānābād (Old Delhi) in 1140/1727 to a prominent family of bureaucrats based in Patna with close connections to the Mughal court and the *nawābs* of Bengal. His *Siyar al-muta'akhhirīn*, which was completed ca. 1195/1781, recounts the history of India from 1118–95/1707–81—i.e., the period spanning the death of Awrangzīb and the establishment of British rule in India. The *Siyar al-muta'akhhirīn* is widely recognized as one of the main primary sources for the eighteenth-century history of India, especially the province of Bengal. The later sections of Ghulām Ḥusayn's history contain several informative accounts of Aḥmad Shāh's invasions of India and his dealings with local powers like the Mughals, Sikhs, and Marathas.¹³⁶

The *Siyar al-muta'akhhirīn* is available several editions as well as in English and Urdu translations. References in this thesis are to the edition by 'Abd al-Majīd, which was published in Calcutta in two volumes in 1833.¹³⁷

Khizāna-i 'āmira by Ghulām 'Alī "Āzād" Bilgrāmī

Ghulām 'Alī Āzād b. Sayyid Muḥammad Nūḥ (d. 1200/1786) was an eminent poet and scholar who flourished in eighteenth century India. He was born on 25 Ṣafar 1116/28 June 1704 to a family of Ḥusaynī sayyids with longstanding ties to Bilgrām, a town located just

¹³⁶ Further information on *Siyar al-muta'akhhirīn* and its author is available in H. M. Elliot, *The History of India, as Told by Its Own Historians*, ed. John Dowson, 8 vols. (London, 1867–77; repr., New York: AMS, 1966), 8:194–98; Rieu, *Catalogue of the Persian Manuscripts*, 1:280b–281b; Storey, *Persian Literature*, 1:625–40; and Stori, *Persidskaia literatura*, trans. and rev. Bregel, 2:922–23.

¹³⁷ Ghulām Ḥusayn Khān Ṭabāṭabā'ī, *Siyar al-muta'akhhirīn: Tārīkh-i mamlakat-i Hind az ibtidā-yi sana-i 1118 hijrī tā 1194 hijrī, mutābiq-i 1782 'isawī, muḥtanī bar aḥwāl-i salṭanat-i haft salāṭīn-i muta'akhhirīn-i Hindūstān 'umūman*, ed. 'Abd al-Majīd, 2 vols. (Calcutta, 1248/1833). For an overview of the English translation and editions of the work, see Ethé, *Catalogue of Persian Manuscripts*, 1:157.

east of Agra in the district of Uttar Pradesh. He spent much of his life travelling across northern India and the Hijaz before eventually settling in the city of Awrangābād in the Deccan. During his travels, Āzād studied under various scholars and received extensive training in the religious sciences as well as the literary arts. He was proficient in Persian and Arabic and composed works in both languages.¹³⁸

Of special relevance to this dissertation is his *Khizāna-i ‘āmira* (The royal treasury), which was completed in Awrangābād in 1176/1762.¹³⁹ This work is a biographical dictionary (*tazkira*) of Iranian and Indo-Persian poets famous for receiving lavish rewards from their patrons. Though most of the 139 *zīkrs* (lit., “recollections”) are dedicated mainly to poets, eleven entries were on some of the prominent political figures active at the time of Āzād’s writing, including Aḥmad Shāh. The entry on the Durrānī ruler surveys the latter’s career from its beginnings as a soldier in Nādir Shāh’s military until his early conquests in India as ruler. Āzād also included entries on various Mughal statesmen and military commanders active at the time of his writing and described their relations with Aḥmad Shāh. As Āzād was a contemporary with direct knowledge of the events related in the *Khizāna-i ‘āmira*, his work is a valuable primary source on Aḥmad Shāh’s activities in India to 1176/1762.

This dissertation makes use of Nāṣir Nīkūbakht and Shakīl Aslam Bēg’s critical edition of the *Khizāna-i ‘āmira*.

¹³⁸ For further details on Ghulām ‘Alī Āzād, see Storey, *Persian Literature*, 1:864–67; and Ghulām ‘Alī Āzād Bilgrāmī, *Khizāna-i ‘āmira*, ed. Nāṣir Nīkūbakht and Shakīl Aslam Bēg (Tehran: Pizhūhishgāh-i ‘Ulūm-i Insānī wa Muṭāla‘āt-i Farhangī, 1390 H.sh./2011), xvii–xxiii.

¹³⁹ For further details on the *Khizāna-i ‘āmira* and its sources, see Ghulām ‘Alī Āzād, *Khizāna-i ‘āmira*, ed. Nīkūbakht and Bēg, xxiii–xxxi; Storey, *Persian Literature*, 1:864; and Stori, *Persidskaia literatura*, trans. and rev. Bregel, 2:1216–17.

Bayān-i wāqīʿ of ʿAbd al-Karīm Kashmīrī

In his *Bayān-i wāqīʿ*, ʿAbd al-Karīm b. ʿĀqibat Maḥmūd Kashmīrī indicates that he was resident of Kashmīr who later found himself in the Mughal capital of Shāhjahānābād at the time of Nādir Shāh’s invasion of the city in 1151–52/1739. Because of his desire to make the pilgrimage to Mecca, he decided to join Nādir’s retinue on its departure from India. Upon reaching Qazwīn in 1154/1741, he was granted permission to continue his journey to Mecca. In 1156/1743, Kashmīrī returned by sea to India. He states that upon returning from his travels, a group of friends encouraged him to write about his experiences. He thus set out to compose the *Bayān-i wāqīʿ*—a detailed account of his travels in Central and West Asia as well as a history of contemporary events in Iran and India.¹⁴⁰

K. B. Nasim’s edition of the *Bayān-i wāqīʿ* is divided into five chapters (*bāb*):¹⁴¹ chapters one and two deal mainly with the career of Nādir Shāh; chapter three, which reads like a travelogue, narrates the author’s journey to Mecca and his return voyage to India;¹⁴² chapter four describes local events in India from the time of his arrival in Bengal down to the death of Muḥammad Shāh in 1161/1748; and chapter five narrates noteworthy events that took place during the rule of Aḥmad Shāh Bahādur (r. 1161–67/1748–54)—whose reign coincided

¹⁴⁰ ʿAbd al-Karīm b. ʿĀqibat Maḥmūd Kashmīrī, *Bayān-i wāqīʿ*, ed. K. B. Nasim (Lahore: Research Society of Pakistan, 1970), 1–2. Biographical details about ʿAbd al-Karīm Kashmīrī remain sketchy. He is supposed to have passed away in 1198/1784 though the source from which this date is derived is unclear. For an early but unreferenced use of this date, see *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 1st ed., s.v. “ʿAbd al-Karīm” (by M. Th. Houtsma).

¹⁴¹ For an assessment of the manuscripts consulted in this critical edition, see Nasim’s remarks in ʿAbd al-Karīm Kashmīrī, *Bayān-i wāqīʿ*, xi–xvi. Further details about the work and its extant manuscripts are found in Rieu, *Catalogue of the Persian Manuscripts*, 1:381b–382b; Ethé, *Catalogue of Persian Manuscripts*, 1:220–21; Storey, *Persian Literature*, 1:326–27; Stori, *Persidskaia literatura*, trans. and rev. Bregel, 2:926–27; Lockhart, *Nadir Shah*, 301; and *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., s.v. “ʿAbd al-Karīm Kashmīrī” (by Mohammad Shafi).

¹⁴² A thorough analysis of the *Bayān-i wāqīʿ* as a history and travelogue is given in Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Indo-Persian Travels in the Age of Discoveries, 1400–1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 243–95. For further details on ʿAbd al-Karīm Kashmīrī and the *Bayān-i wāqīʿ*, see Mana Kia, “Accounting for Difference: A Comparative Look at the Autobiographical Travel Narratives of Hazin Lahiji and ʿAbd-al-Karim Kashmīrī,” *Journal of Persianate Studies* 2 (2009): 210–36.

with that of Aḥmad Shāh Durrānī. The first two chapters of the work were based on a combination of sources, including eyewitness accounts, data obtained by the author from Nādirid courtiers, and information drawn from works like the *Tārīkh-i Nādirī* of Mahdī Khān and the writings of Shaykh Muḥammad ‘Alī Ḥazīn Lāhijī (d. 1180/1766).¹⁴³ Chapters three and four were based mainly on Kashmīrī’s own eyewitness testimony. Alam and Subrahmanyam have recently shown that chapter five of Nasim’s edition of the *Bayān-i wāqī‘* was, in fact, appended to Kashmīrī’s work by the author Muḥammad Bakhsh Āshūb, a later copyist of the work who was eyewitness to the events he described.¹⁴⁴

Chapters four and five of the work are particularly relevant to this study and supply useful details about Aḥmad Shāh Durrānī’s expeditions in northern India till the year 1167/1754. *Bayān-i wāqī‘* also provides useful information not found in other contemporary sources about some of the courtiers and supporters of Aḥmad Shāh (e.g., the Sufi, Darwīsh Muḥammad Ṣābir Shāh, or the bureaucrat, Muḥammad Taqī Khān Shīrāzī) who played important roles in the political affairs of the region.

K. B. Nasim’s critical edition of the *Bayān-i wāqī‘* is utilized in this dissertation.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴³ Details on the biography and writings of Ḥazīn Lāhijī may be gleaned from Alam and Subrahmanyam, *Indo-Persian Travels*, 226–42, 328–29; and Kia, “Accounting for Difference,” 210–36.

¹⁴⁴ In his introductory remarks to the *Bayān-i wāqī‘* (pp. 3–4), Kashmīrī states that he planned for the work to consist of four chapters and a conclusion (*khātima*), though many of the extant manuscripts contain five chapters and no conclusion. K. B. Nasim states that, while writing the text, “the author seems to have changed his mind” and added a fifth chapter to the work. See Kashmīrī, *Bayān-i wāqī‘*, xiii. But Alam and Subrahmanyam show that the contemporary author Muḥammad Bakhsh Āshūb added the fifth chapter to Kashmīrī’s work; see Alam and Subrahmanyam, *Indo-Persian Travels*, 289–90.

¹⁴⁵ For information about the various manuscripts as well as the partial English (Francis Gladwin) and French (Louis Langlès) translations of the *Bayān-i wāqī‘*, see Kashmīrī, *Bayān-i wāqī‘*, xi–xvii.

Ṭahmās-nāma by Ṭahmās Bēg Khān

The *Ṭahmās-nāma* is an autobiography of a slave who had been captured in his homeland in what is today eastern Turkey and taken to India where, over the course of time, he rose to become an officer of rank (*sāhib-manṣab*) within the Mughal military. In the work, Ṭahmās Khān states that he was born in ca. 1151/1738 in a small village named Ārazāt located on the eastern frontier of the Ottoman Empire.¹⁴⁶ At around the age of five (ca. 1156/1743–44), a group of marauding Uzbek soldiers in the Nādirid military captured him and renamed him Zākīr. In the tumultuous period after Nādir's assassination in 1160/1747, he changed masters before eventually being taken to India 1161/1748 and placed in the custody of Muṣīn al-Mulk, the Mughal-appointed governor of Lahore, who renamed him Tīmūr. When Muṣīn al-Mulk died in 1167/1753, Ṭahmās continued to serve his former master's widow Mughalānī Bēgum, the de-facto governor of the city. When Tīmūr Shāh Durrānī was appointed governor of Lahore in 1170–71/1757, the latter renamed him Ṭahmās and granted him the title Khān, by which he is known in the *Ṭahmās-nāma*. Following Tīmūr Shāh's withdrawal from Lahore in 1171/1758, Ṭahmās surrendered control of the city to the invading forces of Muṣīn al-Mulk's former ally Adīna Bēg Khān (d. 1172/1758). He remained in the service of Mughalānī Bēgum for a few more years until the two had a falling out, at which time he left for Sirhind and then Delhi (1176/1763) where he served under various Mughal notables. He entered the service of the military commander Najaf Qulī Khān until the latter's death in 1196/1782. The *Ṭahmās-nāma* was completed at Delhi in this year.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁶ The author indicates that Ārazāt is located eight *kos* east of Bāyazīt, which is near Mount Ararat in eastern Turkey. See Ṭahmās Bēg Khān, *Ṭahmās-nāma*, ed. Muḥammad Aslam (Lahore: Punjab University, 1986), 15–16.

¹⁴⁷ For further details, see Storey, *Persian Literature*, 1:625; Singh, *Ahmad Shah Durrani*, 418–19; Ṭahmās Bēg Khān, *Tahmas Nama: The Autobiography of a Slave*, abridged trans. Pagdi Setu Madhava Rao (Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1967), vii–ix; and Ṭahmās Bēg Khān, *Ṭahmās-nāma*, ed. Aslam, iv–ix.

Information concerning the fate of Ṭahmās beyond this date can be found in the works of his son, Sa‘ādat Yār Khān, an Urdu author well known for his poems written under the penname “Rangīn” but also for his prose compositions, which include a treatise on horses entitled *Faras-nāma-i Rangīn*.¹⁴⁸ Sa‘ādat Yār notes that his father was sent as an envoy of Shāh ‘Ālam II (r. 1173–1221/1759–1806) to the court of Tīmūr Shāh in Kabul in 1205/1791 and in this way maintained relations with leading members of the Durrānī court. We also learn from Sa‘ādat Yār that his father passed away in Delhi in 1803.¹⁴⁹

Despite its lack of dates, which can be procured by consulting contemporary sources, the *Ṭahmās-nāma* is a valuable historical source written by a well-travelled slave-turned-soldier deeply involved in the politics of the time. It offers a degree of detail concerning the social and political conditions of South Asia in the mid-eighteenth century that is not found in many other contemporary histories. Ṭahmās Khān’s eyewitness perspective and relatively detached accounts of the affairs of the Durrānī in northern India as well as his personal dealings with prominent members of the Durrānī court, including Aḥmad Shāh’s son Tīmūr Shāh, are of especial relevance to this dissertation.

References are to Muḥammad Aslam’s edition of the work.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁸ See Sa‘ādat Yār Khān Rangīn, *The Faras-nāma-e Rangīn, or the Book of the Horse by “Rangīn,”* trans. by D.C. Phillott (London: Bernard Quaritch, 1911). Biographical details about Sa‘ādat Yār Khān (e.g. his date of birth, wedding, etc.) and some of the other children of Ṭahmās Khān are scattered throughout the *Ṭahmās-nāma*.

¹⁴⁹ Ṭahmās Bēg Khān, *Ṭahmās-nāma*, ed. Aslam, viii–xi. The editor does not specify which of Sa‘ādat Yār Khān’s writings this information is derived from.

¹⁵⁰ For a description of the manuscript of the *Ṭahmās-nāma* presently housed in the British Library, see Rieu, *Catalogue of Persian Manuscripts*, 3:980b–981a.

1.2.4: Later Durrānī Sources

Husayn Shāhī by Imām al-Dīn Husaynī Chishtī¹⁵¹

Beyond the sparse information he provides about himself in the *Husayn Shāhī* (*HSh* in notes), little is known about the author, Imām al-Dīn Husaynī Chishtī. He states that during his travels to the “western provinces,” he met Shāh Zamān Durrānī (r. 1207–16/1793–1801) in Lahore in 1211/1796–97. He then accompanied the Shāh to Peshawar where he agreed to write a history of his rule. In 1212/1798, he returned to Lucknow (indicating that this was the city of his residence) and received the blessings of his Sufi master (*pīr*), Sayyid Khwāja Abū Muḥsin Husayn Husaynī al-Ḥasanī al-Mawdūdī al-Kumhārī, to write the history. The latter also supplied him with a draft (*musawwada*) of a history of the Durrānī rulers Aḥmad Shāh and Tīmūr Shāh and instructed him to incorporate it into his history of Shāh Zamān. Imām al-Dīn completed the work in Lucknow in the middle of 1213/1798 and named it *Husayn Shāhī* in honour of his *pīr*, Khwāja Abū Muḥsin Husayn.¹⁵²

The *Husayn Shāhī* begins with the standard *basmala* formula and a preface on how the work came to fruition, followed by a brief account of the genealogy of the Abdālī/Durrānī monarchs that closely resembles the genealogical histories described earlier. The section on

¹⁵¹ The title “*Husayn Shāhī*” appears in the author’s preface on folia 4a of British Library manuscript Or. 1663. However, an alternate title, “*Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*,” appears on a flyleaf at the beginning of the manuscript (fol. 1a) as well as its colophon (fol. 210b). Nevertheless, I have opted to use “*Husayn Shāhī*” instead of *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī* both to avoid confusion with Maḥmūd al-Husaynī’s *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī* (not to mention the many other works also known by this title) and since “*Husayn Shāhī*” appears to be the authorial title of the work.

¹⁵² See Imām al-Dīn Husaynī, *Husayn Shāhī*, MS, British Library, Or. 1663, fols. 3b–5b, 208a; William H. Morley, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Historical Manuscripts in the Arabic and Persian Languages, Preserved in the Library of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* (London, 1854), 76; Rieu, *Catalogue of the Persian Manuscripts*, 3:904b–905b; Mann, “Quellenstudien zur Geschichte des Aḥmed Šāh Durrānī,” 107–13; Ethé, *Catalogue of Persian Manuscripts*, 1:237–38; Storey, *Persian Literature*, 1:399; and Stori, *Persidskaia literatura*, trans. and rev. Bregel, 2:1223. Regarding the work’s completion date, on fol. 4a of this manuscript, the author writes that it was completed “in the middle of 1213 AH” (*dar awṣaṭ-i yak hazār dū ṣad wa sīzda hijrī*). According to Rieu (3:905a), another manuscript of the work (shelfmark Or. 1662) gives Lucknow as the city in which the *HSh* was completed. It also gives the date of completion as 10 Jumādā I 1213/20 October 1798.

Abdālī genealogy is quite revealing. In it, the author makes a concerted effort to associate the Abdālī with the Chishtī Sufi Order by asserting that Abdāl b. Tarīn, the putative eponym of the Abdālī confederacy, originally had a different name (*dar āghāz nām-i dīgar dāsht*), which is not disclosed, but that he was later blessed with the lofty title of *abdāl* by the eminent Sufi master, Khwāja Abū Aḥmad Abdāl Chishtī (260–355/874–966) and had been known by that name ever since.¹⁵³ The section on Abdālī genealogy is followed by an account of Aḥmad Shāh beginning with his family background, through his career as a Nādirid soldier, and his later exploits as monarch. The subsequent section on the life and career of Aḥmad Shāh takes up roughly a quarter of the book (fols. 7a–64a), while the remaining sections deal mainly with the reigns of his descendants, Tīmūr Shāh and Shāh Zamān.

Ascertaining the reliability of the section on Aḥmad Shāh—which was completed roughly twenty-six years after his death and long after many of the events it describes—is a thorny matter. As indicated earlier, Imām al-Dīn states in the preface that his accounts of Aḥmad Shāh and Tīmūr Shāh were derived from a draft given to him by his *pīr*; however, the author of this draft is not identified. The ambiguous nature of this statement raises several questions, such as: Was Imām al-Dīn’s *pīr* the author of the draft? Or did an acquaintance of the *pīr* write it? On what authority was the draft written? More importantly, was the author an eyewitness with firsthand knowledge of the events? Or were the accounts written after the fact and based on secondhand information? Our inability to answer such questions with certainty makes it difficult to fully ascertain the dependability of the section on Aḥmad Shāh in the *Ḥusayn Shāhī*.

Another shortcoming of the *Ḥusayn Shāhī* is that Imām al-Dīn refrained from writing about Aḥmad Shāh’s expeditions in Iran and Tūrān (i.e., Turkistan) since he (his sources?)

¹⁵³ Imām al-Dīn, *Ḥusayn Shāhī*, fol. 6b.

did not have sufficient knowledge of them. For this reason, he focused primarily on Aḥmad Shāh's activities in India.¹⁵⁴ We may conclude from its India-centric account of Aḥmad Shāh's reign that the draft utilized by the author was originally composed by an observer based in India who may or may not have been a contemporary of the ruler but who was not a member of the Durrānī royal court and thus not privy to its affairs outside of India.

The assessment made by John Malcolm nearly two centuries ago that the *Ḥusayn Shāhī* is “most probably the best account of the early period of the Durrani empire that is extant” no longer holds true, particularly in light of the recent discovery of a complete copy of the *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī* which, as stated above, was written during the reign of Aḥmad Shāh and includes firsthand accounts of his dealings in Iran, Turkistan, as well as India.¹⁵⁵ But though the *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī* has since superseded the *Ḥusayn Shāhī* in importance, the latter remains a valuable near-contemporary record of Aḥmad Shāh's reign. Beyond the fact that the *Ḥusayn Shāhī* was until recently the more widely disseminated of the two works and became one of the foundational works for the study of the early Durrānī period from the nineteenth century onwards, its detailed accounts of the Durrānī will be compared with the information in the *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*.

The *Ḥusayn Shāhī* has yet to be made available in published form but there are several manuscripts of the work in the libraries and archives of Europe and South Asia. References in this dissertation are to one of the British Library copies with the shelfmark Or. 1663.

¹⁵⁴ Imām al-Dīn, *Ḥusayn Shāhī*, fol. 4a.

¹⁵⁵ Sir John Malcolm's statement is in Morley, *A Descriptive Catalogue*, 76; see also Mann, “Quellenstudien zur Geschichte des Aḥmed Šāh Durrānī,” 113.

Tārīkh-i Aḥmad by ‘Abd al-Karīm ‘Alawī

Based on the data pieced together from the author’s writings, we know that ‘Abd al-Karīm ‘Alawī (also known as Munshī ‘Abd al-Karīm) was a professional secretary (*munshī*) based in Lucknow in the first half of the nineteenth century, during the British East India Company’s residency in the city.¹⁵⁶ Besides working as a local secretary, the author states that he took a great interest in history and, during his retirement (*dar zamān-i khāna-nishīnī*), translated some classical Arabic works into Persian as well as a number of English works on various subjects into Persian and Urdu.¹⁵⁷ His main surviving compositions are the following three histories of contemporary events that were published in lithographed editions between the years 1264/1848 and 1267/1851: the *Muḥāraba-i Kābul wa Qandahār*, a history of the First Anglo-Afghan war, 1839–42; the *Tārīkh-i Punjāb tuḥfatan li-al-aḥbāb*, a history of the First (1845–46) and Second (1848–49) Anglo-Sikh wars; and the *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad*, a history of the Durrānī dynasty till the time of the author’s writing.¹⁵⁸ Aside from the few biographical details found in his writings, little data has surfaced about ‘Abd al-Karīm ‘Alawī’s life.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁶ Not only were all of ‘Abd al-Karīm ‘Alawī’s major works originally published in or near Lucknow, he explicitly mentions at one point in the *Muḥāraba* that he was present in that city; see ‘Abd al-Karīm ‘Alawī, *Muḥāraba-i Kābul wa Qandahār*, ed. ‘Alī Dihgāhī (Tehran: Pizhūhishgāh-i ‘Ulūm-i Insānī wa Mutāla‘āt-i Farhangī, 1391 H.sh./2012), 15–16.

¹⁵⁷ ‘Abd al-Karīm ‘Alawī, *Muḥāraba*, fac. ed., 3; Storey, *Persian Literature*, 1:402–3; Stori, *Persidskaia literatura*, trans. and rev. Bregel, 2:1230–32; and M. Ismā‘īl-pūr, “‘Abd al-Karīm ‘Alawī,” in Ḥasan Anūsha, ed., *Dānishnāma-i adab-i fārsī*, vol. 3, *Adab-i fārsī dar Afghānistān* (Tehran: Wizārat-i Farhang wa Irshād-i Islāmī, 1378 H.sh./1999), 678–79.

¹⁵⁸ The lithograph edition published in Lucknow (1266/1850) was titled *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad*, though it is also referred to in some manuscripts as “*Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*” (not to be confused with Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī’s work with this title); see Storey, *Persian Literature*, 1:402–4; and Stori, *Persidskaia literatura*, trans. and rev. Bregel, 2:1230–32.

¹⁵⁹ Taking at face value Beale’s statement in an 1881 publication that Munshī ‘Abd al-Karīm ‘Alawī had died “about thirty years ago,” Shafi inferred that the author’s death occurred “not much later than the end of 1851” since he was spoken of as alive as late as September 1851; see Thomas W. Beale, *The Oriental Biographical Dictionary* (Calcutta, 1881), 4; and *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., s.v. “‘Abd al-Karīm Munshī” (by Mohammad

Of his historical writings, the most germane to the study of Aḥmad Shāh is the *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad*.¹⁶⁰ The title is somewhat misleading since it suggests that the work is a history of the founder of the Durrānī polity, even though only about a quarter of the entire work is dedicated to him. The contents of the lithographed edition printed in Lucknow, which consists of 54 pages in total, is as follows: the work begins with a brief section containing preface, a genealogy of the Abdālī, and an overview of Nādir Shāh's reign (pp. 1–5); this is followed by sections on the first three Durrānī rulers, namely Aḥmad Shāh (pp. 5–18), Tīmūr Shāh (pp. 18–27), and Zamān Shāh (pp. 27–41); a passage outlining the distances between various provinces of the Durrānī polity (both in Hindūstān and Khurasan), a discussion of the sacred landscape of Chisht, and some tales about the inhabitants of these lands (pp. 41–49); a short account of the affairs of “Turkistan and Nārbūta, its former ruler” (pp. 49–51);¹⁶¹ and a brief narrative of the activities of Maḥmūd Shāh and Shāh Shujāʿ (pp. 51–54). The work concludes by enumerating the sons of Pāyinda Khān—the progenitor of the founders of the Bārakzay dynasty.

In the preface to *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad*, the author states that after completing his history of Shāh Shujāʿ al-Mulk (i.e., the *Muḥāraba*)—who was placed on the throne of Kabul in 1255/1839 with the aid of the English—he sought to write a history of the Durrānī dynasty from its beginnings. He adds that his narrative of events up until the year 1212/1797—which constitutes the bulk of his work—was borrowed from Imām al-Dīn's *Ḥusayn Shāhī*.¹⁶² Towards

Shafī). As Beale passed away in 1875 and his work was published posthumously, Shafī's assertion should be regarded as conjectural.

¹⁶⁰ ʿAbd al-Karīm ʿAlawī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad*, lithog. ed. (Lucknow, 1266/1850).

¹⁶¹ For Schefer's translation of the section in the *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad* on Nārbūta Bay, who is regarded as one of the founders of the Ming Khanate of Khokand, see ʿAbd al-Karīm “Bukhārī,” *Histoire de l'Asie Centrale*, 2:280–86.

¹⁶² ʿAbd al-Karīm ʿAlawī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad*, fac. ed., 3. Mann, “Quellenstudien zur Geschichte des Aḥmed Šāh Durrānī,” 107–13, provides a detailed comparison of the two works which shows that ʿAbd al-Karīm included only slightly modified accounts of the *ḤSh* in his work.

the end of the work, the author reiterates that his narrative of events to 1212/1797 was derived from the *Ḥusayn Shāhī*, but here he also asserts that, of the various affairs recounted in the *Ḥusayn Shāhī*, “[Imām al-Dīn] had witnessed most with his own eyes” (*akṣar-rā bi-chashm-i kh^wud mushāhada wa mu‘āyana karda*).¹⁶³ As discussed earlier, however, the accounts of both Aḥmad Shāh and Tīmūr Shāh in the *Ḥusayn Shāhī* were based on a draft given to Imām al-Dīn by his *pīr*, not his own eyewitness testimony. Besides misrepresenting Imām al-Dīn’s credentials, ‘Abd al-Karīm reproduced only slightly modified versions of the *Ḥusayn Shāhī*’s accounts in his history and did not add appreciably to its already partial (read: Indo-centric) account of the reign of Aḥmad Shāh and his successors.

Mīr Wāriṣ ‘Alī Sayfī translated the *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad* into Urdu in 1875 under the title *Wāqī‘āt-i Durrānī*.¹⁶⁴ The Urdu translation was re-translated into Persian, with some revisions, by the Qājār-era author, Sayyid Ḥusayn Shīrāzī. A copy of this re-translation, now located in the British Library, was completed in Tehran in 1305/1888 and given the title *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*.¹⁶⁵ Mīr Hāshim Muḥaddiṣ’s critical edition of Ḥusayn Shīrāzī’s work, which is based on additional manuscripts of the work located in Tehran that are dated 1303/1886, was published in 2000-1 under the revised title *Tārīkh-i Durrāniyān*.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶³ ‘Abd al-Karīm ‘Alawī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad*, fac. ed., 51.

¹⁶⁴ ‘Abd al-Karīm ‘Alawī, *Wāqī‘āt-i Durrānī*, lithog. ed., trans. Mīr Wāriṣ ‘Alī Sayfī (Cawnpore, 1292/1875); ‘Abd al-Karīm ‘Alawī, *Wāqī‘āt-i Durrānī*, trans. Mīr Wāriṣ ‘Alī Sayfī, ed. Muḥammad Bāqir (Lahore: Panjābī Adabī Academy, 1963). The statement found in Rieu’s *Supplement* (and repeated in Singh, *Aḥmad Shah Durrani*, 429) that the *Wāqī‘āt Durrānī* was the work of Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad Rōshan Khān is incorrect. The latter was, as Storey shows, the brother of the printer at the Muṣṭafā’ī Press in Cawnpore who requested that Wāriṣ ‘Alī Sayfī compose the *Wāqī‘āt-i Durrānī*. See Storey, *Persian Literature*, 1:402–3; and Stori, *Persidskaia literatura*, trans. and rev. Bregel, 2:1231. As noted by Storey, in the preface to this Urdu translation (pp. 1–2), Mīr Wāriṣ ‘Alī Sayfī refers to ‘Abd al-Karīm ‘Alawī as deceased (*marḥūm*) at the time of his writing.

¹⁶⁵ On the manuscript of Ḥusayn Shīrāzī’s work in the British Library (Or. 3550), see Charles Rieu, *Supplement to the Catalogue of the Persian Manuscripts in the British Museum* (London, 1895; repr., 1977), 51.

¹⁶⁶ Sayyid Ḥusayn Shīrāzī, *Tārīkh-i Durrāniyān*, ed. Mīr Hāshim Muḥaddiṣ (Tehran: Wizārat-i Umūr-i Khārija, 1379 H.sh./2000-1), 25–27.

The History of Central Asia by ‘Abd al-Karīm “Bukhārī”

‘Abd al-Karīm b. Ismā‘īl “Bukhārī” is another author about whom we possess little data. In one of the few self-references found in his chronicle, the author states that he journeyed to Kashmir on two separate occasions, including once as a sixteen-year-old, but he does not indicate his date or place of birth or the purposes of his travels. He also states that he was among the retainers of Shāh Zamān Durrānī when the latter fled to Bukhara in 1212/1798.¹⁶⁷ This statement indicates that ‘Abd al-Karīm was not a native of Bukhara, as is often suggested by scholars familiar with his work. He later served as a private secretary to the ambassador of Bukhara (*sirr-kātib-i ilchī-i Bukhārā*) who was dispatched to Istanbul in 1222/1807 by the Manghit ruler of Bukhara, Amīr Ḥaydar (r. 1215–42/1800–26) and it is likely that his brief residence in Bukhara as well as his participation in this mission earned him the *nisba* “Bukhārī.”¹⁶⁸ Soon after his arrival in Istanbul, nearly all the members of his mission contracted an infectious disease and perished, leaving the author in a precarious situation. In time, he was granted an audience by ‘Ārif Big Efendī, described by Schefer as “the Master of Ceremonies” at the Ottoman court, who asked ‘Abd al-Karīm to write a chronicle about the state of affairs in Khurasan, Hindustan, and Turan (Turkistan) in the

¹⁶⁷ ‘Abd al-Karīm “Bukhārī,” *Histoire de l’Asie Centrale*, 1:24. A reference to the date of Shāh Zamān’s exodus to Bukhara is found in Fayz Muḥammad, *The History of Afghanistan*, 1:92–94.

¹⁶⁸ Although the lack of vocalization for this term leaves open the possibility that it should be read *sar-kātib*, i.e., “head-secretary,” Anke von Kügelgen suggests that the correct reading is *sirr-kātib*, i.e., “private secretary”; see Anke von Kügelgen, *Die Legitimierung der mittelasiatichen Mangitendynastie in den Werken ihrer Historiker* (Istanbul: Ergon Verlag Würzburg, 2002), 130. It should be noted that an identical office, called *kātib al-sirr* in Arabic, was in place during the reign of the Mamluk sultan, Qalāwūn (d. 689/1290), and was reserved for the most intimate secretary of the sultan who was privy to information “accessible to no one else.” On the Mamluk office of the *kātib al-sirr*, see Linda S. Northrup, *From Slave to Sultan: The Career of Al-Manṣūr Qalāwūn and the Consolidation of Mamluk Rule in Egypt and Syria (678–689 A.H./1279–1290 A.D.)* (Stuttgart: F. Steiner, 1998), 31, 54, 239–42.

post-Nādirid era. The author thus set out to write his work, which covers the history of the region roughly from 1160/1747 to 1233/1818—the year in which it was completed.¹⁶⁹

In the absence of an explicit authorial title, Schefer's edition of 'Abd al-Karīm's work was published under the title *Histoire de l'Asie Centrale*.¹⁷⁰ The Persian edition of 'Abd al-Karīm's text consists of an introduction and five distinct sections which may be termed "chapters": The introduction (pp. 1–4) describes the arrival of the Bukharan mission to Istanbul and the purpose for composing the history; the first chapter (pp. 4–44) offers an account of the Durrānī polity in Indo-Khurasan; the second chapter (pp. 44–78) focuses on the Manghit rulers of Bukhara; the third chapter (pp. 78–94) focuses on the Qungrat rulers of Khiva; the fourth chapter (pp. 94–102) focuses on the Ming rulers of Khuqand; and the fifth chapter (pp. 102–11) is a less focused survey of some of the lands in and around Indo-Khurasan to which the author had travelled, including Badakhshan, Kashmir, Tibet, and Herat. The bulk of the work focuses on events of political significance, though it is interspersed with data on the social and economic conditions of many parts of Central Asia in post-Nādirid times.

Although 'Abd al-Karīm's sources are rarely mentioned in the work, it is evident that he was familiar with the Persian historiographical tradition and utilized several histories

¹⁶⁹ For more on the author and his work, see 'Abd al-Karīm "Bukhārī," *Histoire de l'Asie Centrale*, 1:1–5, 2:i–vii; Storey, *Persian Literature*, 1:383, 1:400; Stori, *Persidskaia literatura*, trans. and rev. Bregel, 2:1155–56, 2:1224–25; *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., s.v. "'Abd al-Karīm Bukhārī" (by W. Barthold); *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. "'Abd-al-Karīm Bokhārī" (by M. Zand); von Kügelgen, *Die Legitimierung der mittelasiatichen Mangitendynastie*, 130; and Ḥusayn Barzigar, "'Abd al-Karīm," in Ḥasan Anūsha, ed., *Dānishnāma-i adab-i fārsī*, vol. 3, *Adab-i fārsī dar Afghānistān* (Tehran: Wizārat-i Farhang wa Irshād-i Islāmī, 1378 H.sh./1999), 678.

¹⁷⁰ Authors writing in Afghanistan referred to the work alternatively as *Aḥwāl-i khawānīn-i Afghān wa Kābul wa Bukhārā wa Khīwāq wa Khūqand* and *Tārīkh-i Afghān wa Bukhārā*; see 'Abd al-Ḥayy Ḥabībī and Māyil Harawī, comps., *Rāhnumā-yi tārikh-i Afghānistān*, 2 vols. (Kabul: Dawlatī Maṭba'a, 1348–49 H.sh./1969–70), 1:4; and Wakīlī Pōpalza'i, *Tīmūr Shāh Durrānī*, 1:2–3. Both titles appear to be based on the Turkish colophon found in the Paris edition of the text; see 'Abd al-Karīm "Bukhārī," *Histoire de l'Asie Centrale*, 1:111.

(e.g. Juwaynī's *Tārīkh-i Jahāngushā* and Mahdi Khan's *Tārīkh-i Nādirī*) when narrating events that took place prior to his writing. In addition, he states in the introduction that his accounts of contemporary events are based on firsthand knowledge he obtained during his travels or from "the reliable speech of those who have travelled the world."¹⁷¹

As alluded to above, 'Abd al-Karīm was one of Shāh Zamān's retainers and was thus well suited to write about the affairs of the royal court. His chapter on the Durrānī demonstrates a level of knowledge about the dynasty that is not found in many other contemporary sources. Though his account of Aḥmad Shāh's career is brief, the detailed economic information he provides about the Durrānī polity—namely, the revenues produced in its most agriculturally productive provinces—is germane to the analysis of the financial bases of the polity during the reign of Aḥmad Shāh. While it is true that 'Abd al-Karīm's work was completed over forty years after the death of Aḥmad Shāh and that the financial data he gives were likely not static in the intervening years, the figures were recorded in sufficient temporal proximity to allow for a reasonable approximation of the income generated in the major revenue-producing provinces of the Durrānī polity.

References are to the Persian edition of 'Abd al-Karīm's text, which comprises the first of two volumes published in Paris in 1876 under the title *Histoire de l'Asie Centrale*.

Bārakzay Chronicles

With respect to information on the Abdālī-Durrānī and Aḥmad Shāh, chronicles produced under the auspices of Bārakzay leaders of the nineteenth century—including the *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī* by Sulṭān Muḥammad and the *Sirāj al-tawārīkh* by Fayẓ Muḥammad—are

¹⁷¹ 'Abd al-Karīm "Bukhārī," *Histoire de l'Asie Centrale*, 1:3.

largely derivative in that in they lack in original data on the topic. In the case of the *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī*, its account of the Abdālī does include some unique data but is otherwise based largely on the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* and *Tārīkh-i Nādirī*. Likewise, much of the information on the Abdālī-Durrānī in the *Sirāj al-tawārīkh* is derived from works like the *Ḥusayn Shāhī*, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad*, and the *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī*.¹⁷² What is striking is that Bārakzay-era authors like Sulṭān Muḥammad and Fayḏ Muḥammad, among others, appear not to have made use of Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī's *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī* even though it is unparalleled in terms of the wealth of data it provides on Aḥmad Shāh's reign. While of secondary importance for this dissertation's study of the Abdālī-Durrānī and Aḥmad Shāh, the *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī* and *Sirāj al-tawārīkh* are nevertheless of immense historical value, especially for the history of the post-Aḥmad Shāh period.

¹⁷² The sources Sulṭān Muḥammad relied upon have been already discussed earlier in this chapter. For references to the similar sources Fayḏ Muḥammad consulted for his account of the Durrānī, see Fayḏ Muḥammad, *The History of Afghanistan*, 1:12–55n. For further details on the *TSu*, see Storey, *Persian Literature*, 1:404–5; and Stori, *Persidskaia literatura*, trans. and rev. Bregel, 2:1234. On the *ST*, see Storey, *Persian Literature*, 1:406; Stori, *Persidskaia literatura*, trans. and rev. Bregel, 2:1240–42; also see Robert D. McChesney's thorough analysis of Fayḏ Muḥammad and his writings in the introduction (1:xv–cxiv) to the English translation of *ST*.

Chapter 2: History, Historiography, and the Abdālī

2.1: Identifying the Historical Void

The Abdālī-Durrānī tribal confederacy has been the subject of much scholarly analysis thanks largely to the prominence of Durrānī figures in the politics of Central, West, and South Asia since the reign of Aḥmad Shāh. Yet the focus of most studies has been on the activities of the confederacy during and after Aḥmad Shāh's reign whereas relatively little original research has been carried out on the early history of the Abdālī, particularly in the period leading up to Aḥmad Shāh's accession. On account of this disregard for what may be referred to as the confederacy's "pre-Durrānī" history, authors have tended to attribute the rise of the Durrānī to political prominence almost exclusively to Aḥmad Shāh. This emphasis on the Durrānī ruler has overshadowed some of the contributions of earlier generations of Abdālī to the gradual growth in the confederacy's political autonomy in the seventeenth and early-eighteenth centuries. It has also contributed to our poor understanding of some of the broader historical processes that culminated in the formal establishment of the Durrānī polity in 1160/1747 and that are crucial to understanding the local context surrounding Aḥmad Shāh's rise to power.

The general neglect of the pre-Durrānī history of the Abdālī is largely a reflection of the many problems associated with the sources. As Chapter 1 indicates, there is a paucity of primary sources about the Abdālī that date from the pre-Durrānī period. Moreover, there is no evidence that the Abdālī, who comprised a predominantly nomadic confederacy of native Pashto-speaking tribes located in Qandahar and its environs, produced any written records of their activities prior to the eighteenth century. The few known sources from this period that contain references to the Abdālī were mainly composed by authors attached to the Safavid and Mughal courts who possessed limited acquaintance with the tribal confederacy

and its history. Although early eighteenth-century sources composed in late-Safavid, Mughal, and Nādirid political milieus are more informative than their seventeenth-century antecedents, they suffer from similar limitations in that their authors, who were unfamiliar with the Abdālī and their history, tended to focus primarily on the interactions of the confederacy's chiefs with state officials. Although the data in these pre-Durrānī works is of great historical value and will be relied upon in this thesis, it is also relatively sparse and this may explain why these sources have been largely neglected in the vast majority of studies dedicated to the Abdālī.

A related problem is that most studies of the Abdālī are based on sources written after the reign of Aḥmad Shāh. Almost all of these Durrānī-era sources, including the court-chronicle commissioned by Aḥmad Shāh, the *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, treat the subject of Abdālī history only in passing and focus primarily on events taking place after his accession. Noteworthy exceptions to this rule are the few genealogical histories that contain more elaborate accounts of the Abdālī. But while such works contribute in important ways to our knowledge of Abdālī history, they were composed after the late-eighteenth century by which time the political power of the Durrānī was all but assured and they tend to produce retrospective and highly idealized accounts of the Abdālī past that are often not corroborated by other primary sources. The absence of evidence to support such idealistic representations of the Abdālī throws into question the historicity of these sources and, by extension, the various studies that have been based upon them.

Another factor that has contributed to the obscurity of early Abdālī history is the lack of a comprehensive and critical treatment of the sources in the scholarly literature. Most published studies of the Abdālī are based on a small number of Durrānī-era sources, especially the genealogical histories described in Chapter 1, and the authors of these studies

have usually taken the idealistic accounts in the sources at face value and reproduced them in their works. Questions surrounding the historicity and implicit biases of these sources, the contradictions between them, and the broader context in which they were composed are usually elided. Furthermore, while there are certain exceptions, the Durrānī-era sources are consulted without reference to their Safavid, Mughal, and Nādirid antecedents even though the latter can be used to supplement, corroborate, or correct the data in them. The lack of a comparative approach to the sources has resulted in the production of several disjointed, anachronistic, and at times conflicting accounts of the Abdālī past that often raise more questions about the confederacy's early history than they can answer.

The present chapter represents an attempt to address some of the problems associated with the sources and studies related to the Abdālī. It will survey some of the main primary sources for Abdālī history, among the most important of which are two locally produced Abdālī genealogical histories written in the first half of the nineteenth century: the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* and the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i 'ālī-shān az awlād-i Sadō mīr-i Afghān*. Each work offers a unique account of the Abdālī confederacy's genealogical history from the time of its putative eponymous founder Abdāl to the accession of Aḥmad Shāh and thus fills an important void in our knowledge of the Abdālī. As will be elaborated on below, the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* and the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i 'ālī-shān* are not entirely unfamiliar to scholars and the contents of both sources have been partially studied, summarized, and/or translated. Nevertheless, they remain largely unknown to the broader scholarly community and have yet to be examined together in comparative fashion. After overviewing some of their merits and limitations, this chapter will consider the extent to which these sources have been utilized in the past by the authors of the main studies written about the Abdālī.

The overarching objective of this inquiry into the sources is to strengthen our understanding of the historiography as it relates to the Abdālī. In so doing, this study will lay the foundation for the subsequent chapters of this thesis in which these sources will be utilized to explore such poorly understood topics as the Abdālī confederacy's pre-Durrānī history; its relations with local polities (i.e., the Safavid, Mughal, and Nādirid states) and tribes; its internal structure and organization; and the extent to which these and related factors contributed to the emergence of the political autonomy of the Abdālī in the period leading up to Aḥmad Shāh's accession and the inauguration of the Durrānī dispensation.

2.2: Genealogical Histories as Sources for the Study of Abdālī History

Abdālī Tradition Represented as Abdālī History

Among the primary sources that provide accounts of Abdālī genealogy and history are: Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī's *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*;¹ Imām al-Dīn's *Ḥusayn Shāhī*; Maḥmūd al-Mūsawī's *Aḥwāl-i aqwām-i chahārgāna-i Afghān*; Sayyid Muḥammad al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī al-Iṣfahānī's *Nasab-nāma-i Afāghina*;² and 'Abd al-Karīm Bukhārī's untitled history.³ However, in contrast to these works, which treat the question of Abdālī lineage in passing, a distinguishing feature of the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* and the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i 'ālī-shān* is that they are the earliest genealogical histories to offer grand narratives of the Abdālī confederacy's past.

¹ The section of the *TASH* dedicated to Aḥmad Shāh's lineage (*nasab*) describes the ruler as a member of the Sadōzay segment of the Durrānī tribal confederation. It also alludes to the rule of the Sadōzay, including his father Muḥammad Zamān Khān and brother Zū al-Faqār Khān, in Herat. Curiously, the section of the *TASH* on Aḥmad Shāh's lineage ends abruptly. See Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, ed. Murādōf, 1:11a-13a.

² Al-Iṣfahānī was the ambassador of the governor-general of Sindh at the time his work was composed; see Sir John Malcolm, *The History of Persia from the Most Early Period to the Present Time* (London, 1815), 1:598-600. For additional information about this work, see William H. Morley, *A Descriptive Catalogue*, 76-77; Dorn, *History of the Afghans*, 1:xii; and Ḥabībī and Māyil Harawī, *Rāhnumā-yi tārīkh-i Afghānistān*, 1:140. As I have not had access to an original copy of the *Nasab-nāma-i Afāghina*, I have relied on the excerpts of this work in Malcolm's writing.

³ 'Abd al-Karīm "Bukhārī," *Histoire de l'Asie Centrale*, 1:5-7.

That is to say, each text offers a unique narrative of Abdālī history from the time of the confederacy's putative ancestor, Abdāl, up until the reign of Aḥmad Shāh Durrānī.⁴ Moreover, as both works contain information about the Abdālī not found in other primary sources, they are arguably the most important sources available on the pre-Durrānī history of the Abdālī.

Despite their significance, the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* and the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ʿālī-shān* also pose significant challenges for researchers interested in utilizing them to establish a coherent narrative of Abdālī history. One such challenge is the question of their historicity. Much of the information in the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* and the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ʿālī-shān*, especially as it relates to early Abdālī figures, is impossible to corroborate since the Abdālī do not appear regularly in sources until the mid-seventeenth century, and usually only in the context of the Safavid-Mughal contest over Qandahar. In many cases, these genealogical histories represent the sole sources of information on the Abdālī in the preceding period. What complicates matters further is that the data found in these works is often inconsistent and even contradictory.

There are many instances of overlap in the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* and the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ʿālī-shān*; both agree, for instance, that Abdāl was the common ancestor of all Abdālī, and that he had the following six descendants: Razar > ʿIsā > Zīrak > Fōfal/Pōpal > Ḥabīb > Bāmī. Both agree on the centrality of a later descendant of Abdāl named Asad Allāh, also known as Sadō, the putative eponymous founder of the Sadōzay lineage. They also agree that Sadō had five sons—Khwāja Khiḏr, Mawdūd (TMA)/Maghdūd (SAA), Zaʿfarān, Kāmrān, Bahādur—each of whom is the eponym of one of the five Sadōzay lineages (sing.: *khēl*). But the two works also provide contradictory information. For instance, they often disagree on

⁴ The TMA's genealogical account continues down to the time of its completion in 1835.

genealogical particulars, including the identity of Sadō's father. The *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* describes Sadō as the son of 'Umar, while the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i 'ālī-shān* describes Sadō as the son of Ṣāliḥ (for further details, see Appendix 1). The *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* also suggests that Sadō was nominated leader at the age of 25 and lived for 75 years. But in the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i 'ālī-shān*, which, unlike the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī*, provides dates, Sadō was born in 1558, installed as leader in 1598 at around the age of 40, and died in 1627 at the age of 71. One of the prominent Abdālī figures discussed in the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* is Shēr Khān, who is described as a grandson of Sadō but who is not so much as mentioned in the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i 'ālī-shān*.

The parallels between the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* and the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i 'ālī-shān* suggest their authors relied on at least some common sources. But the many contradictions between the two works undermine their veracity. Any serious attempt to gauge their authenticity would require identifying the authors and their sources of information. This is not possible for the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* since the identity of its author(s) is unknown and its sources are not explicitly mentioned in the text. In the case of the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i 'ālī-shān*, however, we know its author and the sources he claims to use. In the preface to the work, the author 'Alī Muḥammad Khān writes that he carefully mined the following sources for data on the family of Sadō: the histories of the Afghan sultans of the Lōdī and Sūrī [dynasties]; *Ṭabaqāt-i Akbarī* [of Niẓām al-Dīn Aḥmad]; *Ā'in-i Akbarī* [of Abū al-Faẓl], *Mir'āt al-Afghān*, which was composed by the decree of Khān Jahān Lōdī in the reign of Jahāngīr; the histories of the Safavid kings composed at the royal courts of Iran [unspecified]; the *Shāh Jahān-nāma* [of 'Ināyat Khān]; *Tārīkh-i 'Ālamgīrī wa Farrukh-siyarī*;⁵ *Tārīkh-i Muḥammad Shāhī* [of

⁵ I have yet to identify any Mughal chronicle known by the title *Tārīkh-i 'Ālamgīrī wa Farrukh-siyarī*. It is possible that this title refers to one or more now lost works written on the reigns Awrangzīb/'Ālamgīr I and/or

Kh^wushḥāl Chand];⁶ *Nādir Nāma*; *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*;⁷ *Risāla-i akhbār-i Khudaka*; and “some information from the oral traditions of trustworthy people” (*chīzī az naql wa riwāyāt-i šīqāt*).⁸

The inclusion of this list of sources gives the impression that the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān* is a more source-based or “historical” account of the Abdālī than the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī*. However this is misleading since the sources from the pre-Durrānī period generally contain little information about the Abdālī, let alone about the various figures discussed in the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān*. In fact, much of the information contained in the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān*, particularly as it relates to mythical Abdālī figures of the remote past, is not corroborated by the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* or by any of the identifiable sources listed in the work’s preface. For instance, the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān*’s author notes that Abdāl lived in the time of Sulṭān Maḥmūd of Ghazna (r. 388–421/998–1030) and he is even said to have accompanied the Ghaznavid ruler during his expeditions in the lands surrounding Kasēghar, i.e., the Sulaymān Mountains, the putative homeland of the Afghans-Pashtuns. Abdāl’s descendent Zīrak is said to have been a contemporary of Shāhrukh Mīrzā b. Amīr Tīmūr (d. 850/1447). According to the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān*, Zīrak sent some of his deputies to the court of the Timurid ruler in Herat to request permission for the Afghans, including the Abdālī, to relocate from Kasēghar to Qandahar.⁹ The *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān* describes Zīrak’s descendant Sadō as a contemporary of Shāh ‘Abbās I (r. 996–1038/1588–1629). It also contains an account of a meeting between Sadō and Shāh ‘Abbās I in Herat in

Farrukh-siyar (r. 1713–19). It seems more likely that the title refers to one or more of the well-known chronicles dedicated to these Mughal rulers; for examples, see Alam, *The Crisis of Empire*, 323–27.

⁶ This work is also known by the title *Tārīkh-i nādir al-zamānī*; see Alam, *The Crisis of Empire*, 325.

⁷ This is likely a reference to the *TASH* by Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, though it could also be a reference to any number of works known by this same title.

⁸ The list of sources is given in ‘Alī Muḥammad Khān, *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān*, fol. 2b.

⁹ ‘Alī Muḥammad Khān, *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān*, fols. 8a–11a, 17b.

1006/1598 at which time the Safavid ruler, being impressed with Sadō's character and abilities, elevated him to the rank of Mīr-i Afghānī or "Chief of the Afghans."¹⁰

Although the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i 'ālī-shān* gives comparatively detailed accounts of these Abdālī figures, none of the textual sources referred to by 'Alī Muḥammad Khān corroborate its accounts of Abdāl, Zīrak, Sadō, and other early Abdālī figures.¹¹ Consider the meeting supposed to have taken place between Sadō and Shāh 'Abbās I. The *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i 'ālī-shān*'s author claims to have consulted "the histories of the Safavid monarchs" yet none of the principal Safavid-era sources mention the Safavid ruler's encounter with Sadō, who the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i 'ālī-shān*'s author alleges to have been granted leadership over all the Afghans.¹² This includes the *'Ālam-ārā-yi 'Abbāsī*, which chronicles the reign of Shāh 'Abbās I, including his activities in Qandahar and his dealings with local Afghans of influence like Shēr Khān Tarīnī. Like Sadō, Abdāl, Zīrak and other individuals featuring in the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i 'ālī-shān* are conspicuously absent from the historical record.

Thus, while the sources listed in the preface of the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i 'ālī-shān* indicate 'Alī Muḥammad Khān was familiar with many of the chief texts of the Irano- and Indo-Persian historiographical traditions, it is evident that he did not draw upon these sources extensively for information on the Abdālī. Rather, it appears their primary function was to serve as the textual foundation upon which the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i 'ālī-shān*'s narrative of the Abdālī past could be constructed. In an effort to historicize otherwise non-historical figures of Abdālī lore like Abdāl, Zīrak, and Sadō, the author subtly wove them into existing narratives of prominent rulers like Sulṭān Maḥmūd, Shāhrukh Mīrzā, and Shāh 'Abbās I

¹⁰ 'Alī Muḥammad Khān, *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i 'ālī-shān*, fols. 18b–19b.

¹¹ A possible exception is the *Risāla-i akhbār-i Khudaka*, but this is an obscure work and known only from a single reference to its title in the TMA. Moreover, that it is dedicated to the Khudaka segment of the Sadōzay lineage suggests it was completed at a relatively late date.

¹² Shēr Khān Tarīnī and his association with the Abdālī will be discussed in Chapter 4.

whose activities in regions in and around the Afghan homeland of Kasēghar are chronicled in the sources. Writing mythical Abdālī personages into the accounts of celebrated rulers of the past in this way appears to have been one of the strategies the author employed to lend an aura of authenticity to the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān*’s account of Abdālī history.

Contrary to what ‘Alī Muḥammad Khān would have his readers believe, the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān*’s account of the Abdālī was not based to any appreciable extent on textual sources. The author refers ambiguously to his reliance on “some information from the oral traditions” (*chīzī az naql wa riwāyāt*) of his interlocutors. The general lack of references to individual Abdālī leaders in the written record suggests that such oral traditions served as his primary sources of information about the Abdālī. One may presume the same is also true of the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī*.

On the basis of the preceding analysis, it would be safe to conclude that the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* and the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān* represent the culmination of independent efforts to connect and codify divergent oral and, to a lesser extent, written traditions about the Abdālī in written form. The accounts both works give of early Abdālī figures may contain kernels of truth that remained lodged in the collective memories of later generations of Abdālī and were preserved in their oral traditions. But the many inconsistencies between them combined with the lack of corroboration by independent sources undermine their reliability as sources for the study of early Abdālī history.

One plausible explanation for these contradictions is that the genealogical data in these works were invented. As Devin DeWeese notes in his study of nineteenth-century genealogical tracts or *nasab-nāmas* whose contents are similar to those in the Abdālī genealogical histories, such works provide far less useful information if they are considered “authentic” since in many cases they would amount to little more than a list of names of

obscure figures, most of whom are not historically identifiable. He adds: “If the genealogies were fabricated however, they compel us to seek the motivation for their formulation.”¹³ The same may hold true for works like the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* and the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān*, which bear many resemblances to the genealogies investigated by DeWeese. An investigation into the reasons why both genealogical histories were written proves far more illuminating than would be the case if they were viewed simply as what they purported to be. As the analysis below aims to show, an inquiry into the environment in which these sources were produced is particularly helpful in uncovering the motivations for their composition. Such an inquiry also helps to explain some of the discrepancies between the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* and the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān*.

Abdālī Genealogies in Context

Works written on Abdālī genealogy proliferated in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, which was a period of great political change in Central Asia. At the time, the Durrānī polity Aḥmad Shāh helped form was faced by various internal and external threats. Many internal rivals from within the Abdālī tribal confederacy challenged the legitimacy of Aḥmad Shāh and his successors. Some were members of the Sadōzay line to which Aḥmad Shāh belonged, while others were members of the Bārakzay, a collateral line within the Abdālī-Durrānī confederacy whose chiefs had traditionally been well represented among the class of *umarāʾ*, or military commanders, in Aḥmad Shāh’s patrimonial-bureaucratic state. The Durrānī dynasts also faced threats from external rivals like the Khalsa Sikhs in the Punjab and various Iranian *amīrs* in Khurasan. In the late-eighteenth century, the Qājārs of Iran began to incorporate parts of Khurasan into their nascent polity

¹³ Devin DeWeese, “The Politics of Sacred Lineages in 19th-Century Central Asia: Descent Groups Linked to Khwaja Ahmad Yasavi in Shrine Documents and Genealogical Charters,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 31, no. 4 (1999): 519.

and threatened the western borderlands of the Durrānī polity. Though the roots of these conflicts on the peripheries of the Durrānī realm went back to the early years of Aḥmad Shāh's reign, they intensified during the rule of his successors. At the turn of the nineteenth century, under the pressure of these tensions, the Durrānī state was on the verge of collapse.

It was in this complex political milieu that many of the Abdālī genealogical histories were produced. One of the salient features of these works is that practically all had been composed by authors associated with the courts of different rulers of the Sadōzay dynasty.¹⁴ As noted in Chapter 1, Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, the author of the *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, was a high-ranking scribe at the court of Aḥmad Shāh. The author of the *Ḥusayn Shāhī*, Imām al-Dīn, spent some time at the court of Shāh Zamān. There is evidence that ʿAbd al-Karīm, who composed his untitled history in Istanbul, began his career as a courtier of Shāh Zamān as well. The connection of *Aḥwāl-i aqwām-i chahārgāna-i Afghān*'s author Maḥmūd al-Musawī to the Durrānī is not clear but his laudatory attitude towards Aḥmad Shāh indicates that he was also linked to the court of a Sadōzay ruler, likely Shāh Shujāʿ.¹⁵ The *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ʿālī-shān*'s author ʿAlī Muḥammad Khān was a member of the Khudaka segment of the Sadōzay lineage with links to the court of Shāh Shujāʿ al-Mulk. The authorship of the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* remains unclear but the author of the *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī*, Sulṭān Muḥammad Khān Bārakzay, who procured a copy of the work, noted it was composed in the period of Sadōzay rule (i.e., 1160–1233/1747–1818).¹⁶ The above are some of the many works containing Abdālī genealogies that were composed in Sadōzay political milieus, though

¹⁴ For a list of Sadōzay dynasts and a chronology of each's time in power, see C. E. Bosworth, *The New Islamic Dynasties: A Chronological and Genealogical Manual* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1996), 341.

¹⁵ Maḥmūd al-Mūsawī, *Aḥwāl-i aqwām-i chahārgāna-i Afghān*, fols. 6a, 9b.

¹⁶ Sulṭān Muḥammad, *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī*, 52.

there are certainly others that are now unaccounted for or that remain in private hands.¹⁷ In contrast, works written on the Abdālī by later authors—be they local, colonial, European, or other—generally include little if anything that is not already contained in the genealogical histories produced within the Sadōzay sphere of political influence.

Because the majority of these works were produced under the auspices of Sadōzay rulers, they focus primarily on the Sadōzay lineage of the Abdālī confederacy and in some way reinforce the specific claims to hereditary leadership of the ruling family.¹⁸ The strong emphasis placed on the Sadōzay right to rule appears to be in part a reflection of the Sadōzay-Bārakzay rivalry that arose in the aftermath of the succession disputes following the death of Tīmūr Shāh b. Aḥmad Shāh in 1207/1793. It was during these disputes that the military commander (*sardār*) Pāyinda Khān—a chief of the Muḥammadzay segment of the Bārakzay lineage whose father, Ḥājji Jamāl Khān, was an officer in Aḥmad Shāh's military—helped secure Zamān Shāh b. Tīmūr Shāh's succession. When Zamān Shāh later discovered a plot led by Pāyinda Khān to depose him, however, he had the Muḥammadzay chief and his co-conspirators executed. This event, which took place in 1214/1799–1800, inaugurated a complex, decades-long crisis within the Durrānī realm that culminated in Pāyinda Khān's son Dōst Muḥammad Khān avenging his father and, largely with his Bārakzay support base, supplanting the Sadōzay as rulers of the Durrānī polity in 1242/1826.¹⁹

¹⁷ An example is the chronicle of 'Abd Allāh Khān Harātī, which was written at the court of Durrānī Prince Kāmārān b. Shāh Maḥmūd (d. 1258/1842). The parts of this chronicle written on Abdālī genealogy have been preserved in Joseph Pierre Ferrier, *History of the Afghans*, trans. Captain William Jesse (London, 1858), 6–12, 134.

¹⁸ An important exception is Sulṭān Muḥammad's *TSu*, which was written in the period after the Bārakzay assumed power in Afghanistan. The author appropriated the account of the Abdālī in the SAA and included it in the section of his *TSu*. He also altered parts of the SAA that suggest Sadō was elected to rule and instead wrote that Bārak possessed leadership over the Abdālī before it was usurped by Sadō (see §2.3). Aside from these alterations, the structure of his narrative of Abdālī history is nearly identical to that of the SAA.

¹⁹ For a brief overview of the dynamics of this complex rivalry and its outcome, see Noelle, *State and Tribe*, 1–17.

It is no coincidence that most Abdālī genealogical histories were composed during what was the highpoint of this Bārakzay-Sadōzay conflict. This political rivalry was written into the historical narratives of these sources, which often trace the origins of the conflict back to the time of the progenitors of the Sadōzay and Bārakzay lineages, Fōfal and Bārak, or their descendants. For instance, in the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* we read that although Bārak was the eldest son of Zīrak and had a right to rule based on the principle of primogeniture, the younger Fōfal was elected to rule on account of the favour accorded to him by his father and by God. Zīrak is also said to have predicted the rule of Fōfal's descendants, including Sadō.²⁰ There is also reference to Bārakzay hostility towards the Sadōzay in the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ʿālī-shān*, which recounts an episode in which a later descendant of Bārak opposed Sadō's election as ruler of the Afghans, thereby foreshadowing the later political rivalry between the Bārakzay and Sadōzay.²¹ By projecting the conflict onto the distant past, these narratives were designed to explain the causes of the crisis facing the Sadōzay in the early nineteenth century; to reinforce the historical and hereditary right of Sadō and his descendants to rule; and to counter the threat posed by the Bārakzay to Sadōzay authority.

Another recurring theme in these works is the special role accorded the Safavid monarchs in establishing historical precedence for Sadōzay leadership. For instance, the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ʿālī-shān* and the *Nasab-nāma-i Afāghina* both assert that Shāh ʿAbbās I recognized Sadō as leader of the Afghans. According to the *Fawā'id al-Ṣafawiyya*, the Safavid monarch who recognized Sadō and his descendants as rightful leaders was Shāh ʿAbbās II (r. 1052–77/1642–66).²² The *Aḥwāl-i aqwām-i chahārgāna-i Afghān* asserts that it was Shāh Ismāʿīl

²⁰ *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī*, fols. 8a–11b.

²¹ ʿAlī Muḥammad Khān, *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ʿālī-shān*, fols. 17a–19a.

²² Abū al-Ḥasan Qazwīnī, *Fawā'id al-Ṣafawiyya*, 158.

who conferred leadership on Sadō.²³ Differences concerning the specific monarch in question notwithstanding, the works agree that the Safavids were responsible for confirming Sadō's status as leader. It seems the authors felt this symbolic gesture, which is reminiscent of the 'Abbāsīd caliph al-Qādir (r. 381–422/991–1031) conferring investiture on Sulṭān Maḥmūd of Ghazna, would bolster the prestige and legitimacy of the Sadōzay rulers in the eyes of their subjects. More importantly, the contention that the Safavids sanctioned the Abdālī political mandate in Khurasan centuries earlier served to counter the claims of the upstart Qājār rulers of Iran who presented themselves as heirs to the Safavids and, on this basis, intended to invade those parts of Durrānī-controlled Khurasan that had formerly been dependencies of Safavid Iran. Indeed, there is evidence from Durrānī-Qājār diplomatic exchanges that the Safavid legacy in Khurasan was a contentious issue for both states at roughly the same time that the Abdālī genealogical histories were being composed.²⁴

As noted earlier, the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* and the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i 'ālī-shān* both affirm the rights of the Sadōzay to legitimate rule but disagree on the details regarding the Abdālī. Such discrepancies appear to stem from the fact both works were produced in different locales and based on independent traditions of Abdālī genealogy and history. The *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i 'ālī-shān*'s author was a member of the Khudaka segment of the Sadōzay lineage residing in Multan. Although the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i 'ālī-shān* describes the affairs of the Sadōzay in general, its main emphasis is on the activities of Sulṭān Khudādād, the eponym of the Khudakas, and his descendants. Multan figures prominently in the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i 'ālī-shān* as the urban center to which many Sadōzay families migrated and where

²³ Maḥmūd al-Mūsawī, *Aḥwāl-i aqwām-i chahārgāna-i Afghān*, fols. 4b–5a. The author does not specify whether it was Ismā'īl I (r. 906–30/1501–24) or Ismā'īl II (r. 984–85/1576–77) that was being referred to, though he likely had in mind the better-known Shāh Ismā'īl I who is credited with founding the Safavid dynasty.

²⁴ Noelle-Karimi, *The Pearl in Its Midst*, 198–99.

their leaders established close ties with the Mughal state. While the author acknowledges that leadership over the Abdālī devolved upon Aḥmad Shāh and his descendants who belonged to the collateral Sarmast line of the Sadōzay lineage, throughout the work he maintains that the Khudakas possessed legitimacy on account of their descent from the rightful leader, Sulṭān Khudādād. While far less is known about the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī*, there are important differences in its account of Abdālī history. While not as overtly partial as the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān*, the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* gives more attention to the Sarmast line of the Sadōzay lineage. In the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī*, Qandahar serves as the locus of Abdālī activities and strong emphasis is placed on relations between the Sadōzay chiefs and the Safavid governors of Qandahar. Unlike the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān*, the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* has less to say about the Mughals and does not mention Multan at all. Since the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* places special emphasis on Abdālī activities in Qandahar and since, as discussed earlier, Robert Leech and Sulṭān Muḥammad also procured copies of the work in Qandahar, it seems fair to assume that the text was originally produced in the Qandahar region. On account of these subtle yet significant differences in points of emphasis, these two genealogical histories may be characterized as typifying two distinct traditions of Abdālī genealogy and history: the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* represents the Sarmast-Qandahari tradition whereas the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān* represents the Khudaka-Multani tradition.

The Mythistory of the Abdālī

An analysis of the socio-political environment in which the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* and the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān* were produced provides a better understanding of how and why the authors of these texts shaped and represented the Abdālī past the way they did.

The following conclusions can be drawn from the preceding analysis: The *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* and the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ʿālī-shān* are two of many Abdālī genealogical histories composed in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century. What sets them apart from others is that they are the most comprehensive and informative sources available for the study of the Abdālī. However, rather than representing the Abdālī past “as it was,” it would be more appropriate to view these genealogical histories as carefully crafted mythhistories intended to appeal to the sensibility of their intended audiences. Their mythical elements consist of numerous accounts of different heroes of tribal lore current among the Abdālī in the early-nineteenth century. The extent to which these accounts accurately represent historical events is not easy to determine since many of the individuals they memorialize are generally absent from the documentary record, particularly in works composed beyond Afghan social and political milieus. Nevertheless, the legendary figures lionized in such works served important symbolic functions. Abdāl, the putative ancestor of the Abdālī, plays a central role in these genealogical histories as a uniting figure for those Abdālī who subscribed to an ideology of common descent. Sadō and his descendants figure prominently as the “natural” ruling class whom the Abdālī could rally around and who could channel the energies of the tribesmen towards a common goal. These sentiments would have appealed especially to the sensibilities of the Abdālī and other Afghan tribesmen loyal to the ruling Sadōzay clan.

There are no clearly discernable boundaries separating the historical and mythical elements of the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* and the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ʿālī-shān*, making it difficult at times to distinguish between them. However, one feature that helps differentiate the historical “layer” from its mythical counterpart is the fact that its description of events and individuals is also mentioned in contemporary sources. This includes, for instance, the

accounts of figures described in both works as descendants of Sadō, such as Mawdūd/Maghdūd, Shāh Ḥusayn Khān, Sulṭān Khudādād, and others who, coincidentally, happen to be referred to in Safavid, Mughal, and Nādirid sources, even if only sparingly. But while the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* and the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān* supply relatively detailed accounts of otherwise obscure Abdālī figures, they tend to embellish historical events involving the confederacy’s leaders and should be approached with caution. By way of example, one may refer to the case of the Abdālī leader Sulṭān Khudādād Sadōzay (d. ca. 1073/1663). The *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān*’s account of Sulṭān Khudādād’s career concludes by suggesting that the latter died suddenly of an illness while preparing to lay siege to Qandahar.²⁵ But in the chronicle of the seventeenth century author Muḥammad Ṭāhir Waḥīd Qazwīnī, we learn that Khudādād had, in fact, been killed during an altercation with the then Safavid-appointed governor of Qandahar, Zū al-Faqār Khān.²⁶ Thus, while the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān* provides important details about Khudādād’s activities (including the siege of Qandahar) that are not found in other sources, it also fails to note the inglorious fate suffered by Khudādād at the hands of Qandahar’s Safavid governor. This case illustrates how information in the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* and the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān* can be used together with data found in other contemporary primary sources to achieve a more nuanced understanding of noteworthy historical events involving the Abdālī.

Underlying both the mythical and historical strata of these texts are their ideological layers. Since many of the genealogical histories were produced in and around Sadōzay court settings, they argue that Sadō and his progeny possessed the sole legitimate right to rule over the Abdālī. The argument for Sadōzay legitimacy was intended to counteract threats posed by local (Bārakzay) and regional (Qājār) rivals. In the absence of supporting evidence

²⁵ ‘Alī Muḥammad Khān, *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān*, fol. 27b.

²⁶ Waḥīd Qazwīnī, *Tārīkh-i jahānārā-yi ‘Abbāsī*, 742.

for the historical claims of the Sadōzay to leadership, the genealogical histories served as propaganda tools articulating the specific prerogatives to rule of one or another segment of the Sadōzay lineage. In this sense, it would be more accurate to refer to the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* and the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān* as genealogical histories of the Sadōzay lineage primarily, and only secondarily as genealogical histories of the Abdālī confederacy.

This analysis demonstrates that the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* and the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān* are very much products of the environments in which they were produced. Although both purport to be about Abdālī history, they tell us equally as much if not more about how later Abdālī/Durrānī communities not only envisioned their own past but also how they wanted their past to be perceived by others.

2.3: Review of Scholarship on the Abdālī

The Dominance of the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī*’s Sarmast-Qandahari Tradition

Of the various sources on early Abdālī history, the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* has exerted the greatest influence on the literature relating to the Abdālī in pre-Durrānī times. Although its precise date of composition is unknown, there is indication it was composed in the first decades of the nineteenth century. As noted earlier, the British officer Robert Leech obtained a manuscript of it during his stay in southern Afghanistan from 1839 to 1842 and utilized it as the basis for his article “An Account of the Early Abdalees.”²⁷ His Afghan counterpart Sulṭān Muḥammad later obtained a copy of the book and used it as one of the main sources for the Abdālī/Durrānī section of his *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī*.²⁸ These two publications

²⁷ For reference to Leech’s stay in Afghanistan, see Major Robert Leech, “An Account of the Early Ghiljaees,” *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* 14, no. 162 (1845): 306.

²⁸ Sulṭān Muḥammad, *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī*, 52–69.

were responsible for disseminating the contents of the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* beyond Afghanistan and both have left their mark on the majority of writings on the Abdālī.²⁹

For instance, Leech's article was used by Muḥammad Ḥayāt Khān in the Abdālī section of his *Ḥayāt-i Afghānī*, which was published in Urdu in 1867.³⁰ Soon after, Henry Priestly produced an English translation of Ḥayāt Khān's work, which was published in 1874 under the title *Afghanistan and Its Inhabitants*.³¹ The publications of Ḥayāt Khān and Priestly were used in several later works written on the genealogy and history of the Afghans in general and the Abdālī in particular. An example is the *Ṣawlat-i Afghānī*, written in Urdu by Muḥammad Zardār Khān and published in 1876. Although Zardār Khān does not identify his sources, his account of the Abdālī is identical to that in the *Ḥayāt-i Afghānī* and was clearly appropriated from the latter.³² Another example is the *Tārīkh-i khūrshīd-i jahān*, which was written in Persian by Shēr Muḥammad Gandāpūrī and published in 1894. The account of the Abdālī in *Tārīkh-i khūrshīd-i jahān* bears close resemblance to the *Ḥayāt-i Afghānī* and in the preface to his book, Gandāpūrī even claims that Ḥayāt Khān appropriated an earlier draft of his work and used it as the basis of the *Ḥayāt-i Afghānī*.³³

The section on early Abdālī history in Sulṭān Muḥammad's *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī* was also utilized by numerous later authors writing inside and outside Afghanistan on the Abdālī. In fact, the genealogical and historical data in several prominent studies of the Abdālī is derived from one or more of the aforesaid works based on the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī*, such

²⁹ To my knowledge, no researcher has taken note of the fact that the accounts of the Abdālī in the publications of both Leech and Sulṭān Muḥammad were based on the SAA.

³⁰ Ḥayāt Khān, *Ḥayāt-i Afghānī*, 116–46. on p. 131, the author explicitly mentions his reliance on Leech's work.

³¹ Muḥammad Ḥayāt Khān, *Afghanistan and Its Inhabitants*, trans. Henry Priestly (Lahore, 1874), 57–76.

³² Muḥammad Zardār Khān, *Ṣawlat-i Afghānī*, lithog. ed. (Cawnpore, 1876), 336–45. A genealogical table of the Abdālī is provided on pp. 332–34 of the *Ṣawlat-i Afghānī*.

³³ Gandāpūrī, *Tārīkh-i khūrshīd-i jahān*, 170, 181–82; also see p. 2 for the author's discussion of the *Ḥayāt-i Afghānī*.

as the *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī*, *Ḥayāt-i Afghānī*, *Ṣawlat-i Afghānī*, and *Tārīkh-i khūrshīd-i jahān*. This includes the studies of the following authors: George Passman Tate;³⁴ Fayz Muḥammad Kātib Hazāra;³⁵ ‘Abd al-Ḥayy Ḥabībī;³⁶ Mīr Ghulām Muḥammad Ghubār;³⁷ Ganda Singh;³⁸ ‘Azīz al-Dīn Wakīlī Pōpalza’ī;³⁹ Ashraf Ghani;⁴⁰ Ludwig Adamec;⁴¹ Daniel Balland;⁴² and Christine Noelle-Karimi.⁴³ As Table 1 below shows, one of the common features of these publications on the Abdālī is their reliance on one or more works based on the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī*. This explains why they all provide nearly identical data on Abdālī history and genealogy.⁴⁴

By comparison, the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān* has received far less attention than the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* despite its being equally comprehensive in scope. One of the few scholars to utilize it was Raverty, who produced an English translation of the introduction (*muqaddima*) in his *A Grammar of the Pukhto*.⁴⁵ Later authors like Tate, Ḥabībī, Ghubār, Balland, and others knew of the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān* solely through the introductory section

³⁴ George Passman Tate, *The Kingdom of Afghanistan: A Historical Sketch* (Bombay, 1911; repr., New York: AMS, 1975), 32–44.

³⁵ Fayz Muḥammad, *The History of Afghanistan*, 1:3n.

³⁶ Ḥabībī, “Da Abdāliyānū Mashāhīr,” 200–18; Ḥabībī, *Tārīkh-i Afghānistān ba’d az Islām*, 80.

³⁷ Ghubār, *Aḥmad Shāh Bābā-yi Afghān*, 5–8.

³⁸ Singh, *Ahmad Shah Durrani*, 1–14.

³⁹ Wakīlī Pōpalza’ī, *Aḥmad Shāh*, 1–9; and Wakīlī Pōpalza’ī, *Tīmūr Shāh Durrānī*, 1:21–22. Though Wakīlī Pōpalza’ī often omits references to his sources of information in the notes of his publication, *Tīmūr Shāh Durrānī* includes *Ḥayāt-i Afghānī*, *Tārīkh-i khūrshīd-i jahān*, *TSu*—all works deriving information on the Abdālī ultimately from the SAA—among the list of sources consulted (pp. 1–2, 6).

⁴⁰ Ghani, “Production and Domination,” 320–26.

⁴¹ Ludwig W. Adamec, *Les Dourranis aux 18ème et 19ème siècles* (Paris: CEREDAF, 1995), 20–25, 30.

⁴² *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. “Dorrānī” (by Daniel Balland).

⁴³ Noelle, *State and Tribe*, 228–35, 347–48. The genealogical tables of the Abdālī found on pp. 384 and 386 are also taken from SAA-based sources like the *TSu*.

⁴⁴ Minor discrepancies in genealogical details appear to be the additions/alterations of later authors.

⁴⁵ Raverty, *A Grammar of the Pukhto*, 7–24.

translated by Raverty.⁴⁶ Over the last few decades, knowledge of the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān* has improved somewhat thanks mainly to the publications of Kamal Khan and A. M. K. Durrani, both members of the Sadōzay community of Multan who, as noted earlier, had access to private copies of the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān* that they used in their various studies of the Sadōzay. These exceptions notwithstanding, however, the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān* remains relatively unknown to the broader scholarly community.

The widespread utilization of various works based on the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* has contributed to the relative neglect of the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān*’s Khudaka-Multani tradition and assured the preponderance of the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī*’s Sarmast-Qandahari tradition in the literature on Abdālī genealogy and history.

Lack of Direct Engagement with the Primary Sources

In addition to the dominance of the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī*’s Sarmast-Qandahari tradition in the literature on the Abdālī, a related theme is the lack of direct engagement with either the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* or the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān*. As the chart above shows, Raverty, Kamal Khan, and A. M. K. Durrani are among the handful of authors to have consulted manuscripts of the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān*, while Leech and Sulṭān Muḥammad are among the few to have consulted manuscripts of the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī*.⁴⁷

The reasons for the lack of direct engagement with the original sources are unclear. Most authors who relied on Leech, Sulṭān Muḥammad, and other *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī*-

⁴⁶ Tate, *The Kingdom of Afghanistan*, 33; Ghubār, *Aḥmad Shāh Bābā-yi Afghān*, 7; Ḥabībī, “Da Abdāliyānū Mashāhīr,” 202–5, 215; Ḥabībī, *Tārīkh-i Afghānistān ba’d az Islām*, 80; *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. “Dorrāni” (by Daniel Balland).

⁴⁷ A possible exception is A. M. K. Durrani’s student Humaira Dasti. However Dasti does not indicate whether or not she consulted an original copy of the TMA and may have relied on Durrani’s studies for information about the work. For her references to the TMA, see Humaira Faiz Dasti, *Multan: A Province of the Mughal Empire, 1525–1751* (Karachi: Royal Book Company, 1998), 162–64, 168–69, 187, 192–94, 197–200, 248, 285.

based works seem to have been oblivious to the fact that their sources derived from the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī*. In the case of the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ʿālī-shān*, several authors were aware of its existence through Raverty but did not consult the work itself, perhaps due to the perceived unavailability of copies of it. Whatever the specific reason, most publications written on the Abdālī are based on secondary, not primary sources.

The lack of direct engagement with the original sources has unfortunately had a significant impact on the scholarship on the Abdālī. Namely, scholars have been unable to identify publications that are derived from the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* or the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ʿālī-shān* but that do not always faithfully represent the data in these sources. With respect to the publications of Leech and Sulṭān Muḥammad, while it is true that they are based largely on the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī*, both authors also incorporated their personal observations and data from other sources that are not contained in the work. In the case of Leech, while his account of Abdālī history is based primarily on the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī*, the opening pages of his publication includes information about the Abdālī from other works including Niʿmat Allāh's *Tārīkh-i Khān Jahānī wa makhzan-i Afghānī* as well as the writings of his fellow colonial authors Sir William Jones, Mountstuart Elphinstone, and Sir John Malcolm.⁴⁸ Throughout his account, Leech also recounts observations from the time of his residency in Afghanistan when he frequently interacted with, and obtained information from, the local Afghan population.⁴⁹

As for Sulṭān Muḥammad, while the author, like Leech, appropriated long passages of the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* for the section of his *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī* on the Abdālī, he also altered certain parts of the work, particularly those that are disparaging towards the

⁴⁸ Leech, "An Account of the Early Abdalees," 445–47, 467n.

⁴⁹ Leech, "An Account of the Early Abdalees," 448, 454–55, 456, 467–68n.

Bārakzay lineage to which he belonged. A specific example is the account of the Abdālī chief Zīrak and his four children, Bārak, Alakō, Musā, and Fōfal. According to the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī*, towards the end of his life Zīrak convened an assembly of tribal leaders in which his eldest son Bārak was elected chief of the Abdālī. During one of the seasonal migrations of the Abdālī that occurred during Bārak's leadership, the elderly and frail Zīrak was left incapacitated in his tent (*yūrt*). The three elder brothers Bārak, Alakō, and Musā refused to help Zīrak, for they viewed him as a burden and desired to be rid of him. In the end, only Zīrak's youngest son, Fōfal, offered him aid. After recovering from this ordeal, Zīrak chastised Bārak, Alakō, and Musā for their perfidity and praised Fōfal for his fidelity. Zīrak also foreshadowed Fōfal's leadership over his brothers' progeny and the Afghans generally.⁵⁰ It is curious that Sulṭān Muḥammad follows the general trajectory of the narrative in the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* excepting this episode involving Zīrak, which he curiously omits. In its place, he writes that Fōfal plotted to turn Zīrak against Bārak and was in this way able to usurp power when their father passed away.⁵¹ Without consulting the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī*, it would be impossible to locate this instance of the author altering the text. But by reading the *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī* alongside the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī*, it becomes clear that while the latter served as the textual basis for Sulṭān Muḥammad's account of the Abdālī in the *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī*, he also manipulated elements of its narrative.

Kamal Khan's study is based largely on the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i 'ālī-shān* but also contains data from other sources that are inconsistent with or otherwise uncorroborated by

⁵⁰ *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī*, fols. 8a–11b. Sulṭān Muḥammad also omits the account in the SAA (fols. 20b–21a) of a failed Bārakzay rebellion against Fōfal's descendant 'Umar (who, according to this source, was the father of Sadō, eponym of the Sadōzay lineage).

⁵¹ Sulṭān Muḥammad, *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī*, 53–54. It would be worthwhile to elaborate on the rather obvious political motivations behind the author manipulating the SAA's apocryphal account of Sadō and Bārak. However to do so would be beyond the scope of the present project.

that work. As an example, the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān* notes that the ancient homeland of the Afghan tribes, including the ancestors of the Abdālī, is Kasēghar, which is the Pashto name for Takht-i Sulaymān (Throne of Solomon)—a mountain peak belonging to the Kōh-i Sulaymān (also known in the scholarship as the Sulaymān Range) straddling what is today southeastern Afghanistan and northwestern Pakistan.⁵² In his study, Kamal Khan includes a more common yet distinct tradition found in Ni‘mat Allāh’s *Tārīkh-i Khān Jahānī*, according to which the ancient homeland of the Afghans is Ghūr, the mountainous region in what is today central Afghanistan. Although this distinct tradition is not found in the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān*, Kamal Khan nevertheless weaves it into his narrative of the origins of the Afghans and writes that in ancient times the Afghans inhabited both Ghūr and Kasēghar.⁵³ Another example is found later in Kamal Khan’s study where he recounts a suspicious tradition of the Abdālī leader Sulṭān Khudādād reaching an agreement with the Ghilzay leader Malik Malakhay Ṭokhī whereby some of the fertile lands situated between Qandahar and Ghazni would be divided between their respective tribes.⁵⁴ As his sources of information, Kamal Khan cites the *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī*, *Ḥayāt-i Afghānī*, and *Ṣawlat-i Afghānī*.⁵⁵ Although the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān*, which contains a lengthy account of Sulṭān Khudādād’s career,

⁵² On Kasēghar as the Pashto equivalent of the Persian Takht-i Sulaymān, see Raverty, *Notes on Afghanistan and Baluchistan*, 464–67, 577–78.

⁵³ Kamal Khan, *Rise of Saddozais*, 20–29, 35.

⁵⁴ Kamal Khan, *Rise of Saddozais*, 90–91.

⁵⁵ See Sulṭān Muḥammad, *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī*, 60. Note that while Sulṭān Muḥammad uses the spelling Ṭokhī for the clan name of Malik Malakhay, it is also commonly spelled Tōkhī. For examples of the latter spelling, see *Shajara wa silsila-i Afghāniyya*, fols. 73b–75b; Maḥmūd al-Mūsawī, *Aḥwāl-i aqwām-i chahārgāna-i Afghān*, fols. 29b, 31b; and Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, ed. Murādōf, 1:36a–37b. Malik Malakhay is also mentioned in the works of Leech, Ḥayāt Khān, and Zardār Khān; see Leech, “An Account of the Early Abdalees,” 310–12; Ḥayāt Khān, *Ḥayāt-i Afghānī*, 123; Zardār Khān, *Ṣawlat-i Afghānī*, 337. It is possible that Ḥayāt Khān derived his information about Malik Malakhay from the publications of Leech and Sulṭān Muḥammad. Ḥayāt Khān’s account is largely reproduced in the work of Zardār Khān and in ‘Abd al-Ra’uf Bēnawā, *Hōtakī-hā* (Kabul: Maṭba‘a-i Dawlatī, 1335 H.sh./1956), 6–8n.

does not corroborate this tradition, Kamal Khan incorporates it into his account of Sulṭān Khudādād and does not bother to question its validity. There are several such cases in which the author freely amalgamates data from outside sources into his otherwise *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān*-based account of the Abdālī without discussing how such data differs or even conflicts with the information found in the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān*.⁵⁶

On account of the lack of direct engagement with these sources, there has been no detailed comparative analysis made of the contents of both *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* and the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān*. Authors who utilize a publication based on the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* generally reproduce its account of events while neglecting to mention how it compares and contrasts with the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān*. The few authors who have written works based on the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān* also do not adopt a comparative approach to the sources on the Abdālī. Although Kamal Khan’s study draws on various *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī*-based works that provide distinct versions of Abdālī genealogy and history, he makes no attempt to reconcile the many differences between them and the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān*.⁵⁷ In his studies, A. M. K. Durrani adopts an altogether dismissive attitude towards sources based on the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* and limits himself to “correcting” information in them that happens to contradict the Khudaka-Multani tradition of Abdālī history in the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān*.⁵⁸

The closest attempt at a comparative analysis of the different traditions of Abdālī history is found in two recent publications by Noelle-Karimi. Unlike the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i*

⁵⁶ Besides his uncritical treatment of the sources, Kamal Khan’s study is replete with spelling, grammar, transliteration, and factual errors. Some of these may derive from an Urdu translation of the TMA produced by his grandfather, Ḥafīz Allāh Khān, which he describes in passing in the preface to his *Rise of Saddozais*; see Kamal Khan, *Rise of Saddozais*, 14, 17–18.

⁵⁷ For examples in the author’s bibliography, see Kamal Khan, *Rise of Saddozais*, 331–37.

⁵⁸ For example, see Durrani, *Multān under the Afghāns*, 16n25, 17n30, 18n33, 20n43, 22n52.

Abdālī-based account of the *Abdālī* found in her earlier work, Noelle-Karimi's recent publications make frequent use of new sources, including Safavid and Mughal chronicles and Kamal Khan's study of the *Abdālī* that is based on the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i 'ālī-shān*.⁵⁹ She also relies on Sulṭān Muḥammad's *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī*, which she views as being of "equal value" to the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i 'ālī-shān*. However, like many other authors, she seems unaware of the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī*'s existence and the fact that the *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī*'s account is derived largely from it. And besides pointing out some of the discrepancies between the *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī* and the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i 'ālī-shān*'s accounts of *Abdālī* history, she does not mention that these differences stem from the fact that they represent two distinct traditions of *Abdālī* history. Moreover, her account of the *Abdālī* is based largely on the publications of Sulṭān Muḥammad and Kamal Khan, which, as noted above, are not always faithful to the primary sources they were derived from.⁶⁰ Thus, while Noelle-Karimi's recent studies are important contributions to the study of *Abdālī* history, they do not fully address the need for a comparative analysis of the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* and the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i 'ālī-shān*.

⁵⁹ Noelle-Karimi, *The Pearl in Its Midst*, 75n232; also, see Christine Noelle-Karimi, "The Abdali Afghans between Multan, Qandahar and Herat in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," in *Beyond Swat: History, Society and Economy along the Afghanistan-Pakistan Frontier*, ed. Benjamin D. Hopkins and Magnus Marsden (London: Hurst, 2013), 34–35, 271n14.

⁶⁰ Noelle-Karimi, *The Pearl in Its Midst*, 79n262, 79n266, 80n271.

Table 1. Usage of the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* and the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān* in Publications on the Abdālīs

Publications (arranged by date)	Works Preserving <i>Tazkirat</i> 's Khudaka-Multani Tradition			Works Preserving <i>Shajara</i> 's Sarmast-Qandahari Tradition				
	<i>Raverty</i>	<i>Kamal Khan</i>	<i>Durrani</i>	<i>Leech</i>	<i>Sulṭānī</i>	<i>Ḥayāt</i>	<i>Ṣawlat</i>	<i>Khūrshīd</i>
Tate (1911)	X			X	X			
Fayẓ Muḥammad (1912)					X	X		
Ghubār (1944)	X				X	X		X
Ḥabībī (1945)	X				X	X		X
Singh (1959)					X	X	X	X
Ḥabībī (1966)	X				X	X		
Wakīlī Pōpalza'ī (1967)					X	X		X
Ghani (1982)				X	X			
Adamec (1995)						X		X
Balland (1995)	X			X	X	X		
Noelle[-Karimi] (1997)				X	X	X		

Misconceptions in the Scholarly Literature

The lack of a comparative approach to the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* and the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ʿālī-shāh* is actually reflective of a broader tendency among scholars to read one or a few of the various writings with data on the Abdālī in isolation and in piecemeal fashion and to reproduce their particular account of events uncritically. This approach to the sources has given rise to misconceptions about the Abdālī that remain prevalent in the scholarly literature.

One of the common misconceptions is the purported connection between the Abdālī and the Safavid monarch Shāh ʿAbbās I. Laurence Lockhart, an authority on the late-Safavid and Nādirid periods of Iranian history, wrote about the emergence of Afghan political authority in several of his publications. Concerning the early history of the politically prominent Abdālī and Ghilzay, he states that both “had migrated westward and south-westward from their mountain country and settled upon the more fertile plains of Qandahar and Zamindavar and the valleys of the Arghandab and Tarnak. Shah ʿAbbas I, in consequence of a rising of the Abdalis, banished most of them to the neighbouring province of Herat; the Ghalzais were thus left by far the most powerful and influential community in Qandahar.”⁶¹ Lockhart provides similar descriptions of the Abdālī in a later publication but adds that Shāh ʿAbbās I relocated the Abdālī to Herat because of “pressure from” the Ghilzay and that, in 1006/1597-98, he bestowed the title of Mīr-i Afāghina or “Chief of the Afghans” upon Sadō, a member of the Pōpalzay clan of the Abdālī confederacy.⁶²

The notion of a close connection between Sadō and Shāh ʿAbbās I has since taken on a life of its own and been repeated in several later studies of the Abdālī. For instance, in *The*

⁶¹ Lockhart, *Nadir Shah*, 2.

⁶² Lockhart, *The Fall of the Ṣafavī Dynasty*, 95–96; *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., s.v. “Abdālī” (by L. Lockhart).

Pathans, Olaf Caroe wrote that ‘Abbās I came to power in 1587 and “two years later [i.e. in 1589], Malik Saddo was chosen chief of the Abdalis.”⁶³ Following Caroe’s lead, Noelle-Karimi wrote that Sadō “is first mentioned in the year 1589 when Shah ‘Abbas entrusted him with the protection of the highroad between Herat and Qandahar” and that he was also given the title *Mir-i Afāghina*.⁶⁴ Concerning the historical ties between Shāh ‘Abbās I and the Abdālī, Daniel Balland also writes: “The earliest mention of a confederation by that name dates from the 16th century, when Shāh ‘Abbās I (r. 996-1038/1588-1629) bestowed supreme command of it upon the chief of the Pōpalzay tribe.”⁶⁵

Lockhart does not indicate any source for his assertion that Shāh ‘Abbās I granted Sadō the title of *Mīr-i Afāghina*, but likely relied on the authority of Raverty, who includes it in his *Notes on Afghanistan and Baluchistan*.⁶⁶ Though Lockhart did not cite Raverty’s publication in his footnotes when making this claim, he did refer to it in other sections of his study and was clearly familiar with the work.⁶⁷

⁶³ Olaf Kirkpatrick Caroe, *The Pathans, 550 BC-AD 1957* (London: Macmillan, 1958), 223, 449n. Caroe also discusses the Abdālī on pp. 252–54, 450–51.

⁶⁴ Noelle, *State and Tribe*, 229.

⁶⁵ *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. “Dorrānī” (by Daniel Balland). Other works that repeat the assertion (evidently on the authority of Lockhart, Caroe, and/or their followers) that the Abdālī were resettled in Herat in the reign of Shāh ‘Abbās I and/or that the latter appointed Sadō “*Mir-i Afāghina*” include *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., s.v. “Qandahar” (by C. E. Bosworth); Vartan Gregorian, *The Emergence of Modern Afghanistan: The Politics of Reform and Modernization, 1880-1946* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1969), 44; H. R. Roemer, “The Safavid Period,” in *The Cambridge History of Iran*, vol. 6, *The Timurid and Safavid Periods*, ed. Peter Jackson and Laurence Lockhart (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 314–16; Thomas J. Barfield, *Afghanistan: A Cultural and Political History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), 95; André Wink, “On the Road to Failure: The Afghans in Mughal India,” in *Islamicate Traditions in South Asia, Themes from Culture & History*, ed. Agnieszka Kuczkiewicz-Fras (New Delhi: Manohar, 2013), 331.

⁶⁶ Raverty, *Notes on Afghanistan and Baluchistan*, 603.

⁶⁷ Lockhart, *The Fall of the Ṣafavī Dynasty*, 81n3, 561. Lockhart also included Raverty’s work in the bibliography of his earlier publication, *Nadir Shah*. See Lockhart, *Nadir Shah*, 325.

Caroe also does not mention his source of information but, like Lockhart, seems to have relied on Raverty for his claim that Sadō was made chief in the year 1589. This same date is found in Raverty's *Notes on Afghanistan and Baluchistan*, where the author writes, "In 1006 H. (1589 A.D.) Sadō was chosen chief of his tribe."⁶⁸ It is unlikely Caroe derived this data from anywhere else. The year 1589 is clearly a typo for 1598, as 1006 AH corresponds to the year 1597-98 CE.⁶⁹ It appears Caroe took Raverty's mistaken date of 1589 at face value.⁷⁰

While several authors relied on Raverty for drawing the connection between Shāh ʿAbbās I and Sadō, none bothered to look into his sources of information. This is likely because Raverty does not clearly indicate his sources and only states in a footnote that, according to the *ʿĀlam-ārā-yi ʿAbbāsī*, Shāh ʿAbbās I conferred the title of Sulṭān upon Sadō.⁷¹ As noted earlier, however, to my knowledge there is no reference to Sadō at all, let alone Shāh ʿAbbās I conferring upon him the title of Sulṭān, in any of the Safavid sources, whether the *ʿĀlam-ārā-yi ʿAbbāsī* of Iskandar Bēg Turkmān or other chronicles dedicated to the ruler like the *Afzal al-tawārikh* of Faḏlī Bēg Khūzānī. Raverty's claim is thus unsubstantiated. Moreover, the earliest source I have come across that gives the date of 1006/1598 for Sadō's

⁶⁸ Raverty, *Notes on Afghanistan and Baluchistan*, 603n.

⁶⁹ Although Raverty included the mistaken date of 1589 in the footnotes to p. 603, Caroe seems to have overlooked the fact that earlier on the same page Raverty also provided the correct date of 1006/1597-98.

⁷⁰ Citing Raverty and Caroe, Noelle-Karimi also included this date of 1589 in the section of her study dedicated to Abdālī history; see Noelle, *State and Tribe*, 229, 347. Another one of the authors cited by Noelle, Ashraf Ghani, also included the date of 1589 (derived from Caroe) in his study. While Ghani made a point of explicitly stating that Caroe "does not indicate the source for his assertion," he did not delve any further into the source of Caroe's error. See Ghani, "Production and Domination," 318-19.

⁷¹ For some of the "serious problems" posed by Raverty's writings, including his uncritical treatment of the sources and tendency not to cite his sources of information, see Arlinghaus, "The Transformation of Afghan Tribal Society," 25-28.

appointment as the Mīr-i Afāghina by Shāh ‘Abbās I is the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān*.⁷² It has already been established that Raverty was one of few authors intimately familiar with the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān* and his statement that Shāh ‘Abbās I conferred the rank of “Chief of the Afghans” must certainly have derived from this work.⁷³

Balland’s assertion that Shāh ‘Abbās I bestowed supreme command of the Abdālī on a Pōpalzay chief (Sadō?) is also problematic. The only sources he refers to are the works of the early nineteenth-century colonial authors Mountstuart Elphinstone and Sir John Malcolm, neither of whom were authorities on early Abdālī history.⁷⁴ In the brief section on the Abdālī in his *An Account of the Kingdom of Caubul*, Elphinstone does not mention Shāh ‘Abbās I and only refers to a mysterious patent “from one of the first of the Suffavee kings of Persia, appointing the chief of the Suddozyes to the command of the Abdallees.”⁷⁵ In his *History of Persia*, Malcolm does briefly mention that Shāh ‘Abbās I granted Sadō authority over the Afghans but his information about the Abdālī was derived from the *Nasab-nāma-i Afāghina* of Sayyid Muḥammad al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī al-Iṣfahānī, which was completed in 1224/1809, only a few years prior to the time of his own writing.⁷⁶

Although various authors assert Shāh ‘Abbās I established relations with the Abdālī, none include evidence from sources written in the Safavid period (906–1135/1501–1722) to

⁷² The full date is 22 Dhū al-Ḥijja 1006, which corresponds to July 26, 1598; see ‘Alī Muḥammad Khān, *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān*, fols. 19a–19b. The problems surrounding ‘Alī Muḥammad Khān’s dating of this meeting between Sadō and Shāh ‘Abbās I are discussed in Chapter 4.

⁷³ For further indication that Raverty based his assertion on the TMA, see Arlinghaus, “The Transformation of Afghan Tribal Society,” 94n27.

⁷⁴ Consider Elphinstone’s statement: “The Dooraunees were formerly called Abdaulles...I have been able to learn little or nothing of their early history.” See Elphinstone, *An Account of the Kingdom of Caubul*, 396.

⁷⁵ Elphinstone, *An Account of the Kingdom of Caubul*, 397.

⁷⁶ Balland refers to the following French translation of Malcolm’s *History of Persia* (1815): Sir John Malcolm, *Histoire de la Perse, depuis les tems les plus anciens jusqu’à l’époque actuelle: Suivie d’observations sur la religion, le gouvernement, les usages et les mœurs des habitans de cette contrée*, 4 vols. (Paris, 1821), 2:410–11.

support this claim. It is possible that nineteenth century works like the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān* and *Nasab-nāma-i Afāghina* preserved local accounts of Shāh ‘Abbās I’s relations with Sadō that were omitted in the Safavid chronicles; however, this theory falls apart considering that other nineteenth century sources provide contradictory accounts. As noted earlier, in his *Aḥwāl-i aqwām-i chahārgāna-i Afghān*, Maḥmūd al-Mūsawī suggests that Sadō was appointed leader of the Abdālī by Shāh Ismā‘īl.⁷⁷ Sulṭān Muḥammad writes that Sadō became leader of the Abdālī in 840/1436–37, decades prior to the advent of the Safavid dynasty!⁷⁸ Such inconsistencies, which are encountered frequently in nineteenth-century sources, cast serious doubt on the veracity of the alleged relationship between Shāh ‘Abbās I and Sadō, yet they are habitually overlooked in the scholarly literature. Moreover, the evidently ideological motivations behind this otherwise baseless claim are often ignored.

Equally problematic is the supposed historical connection between the Abdālī and Herat since Shāh ‘Abbās I’s reign. For instance, in *Nadir Shah* Lockhart suggests that “in consequence of a rising of the Abdalis” Shāh ‘Abbās I “banished” most of them to Herat.⁷⁹ In *The Fall of the Ṣafavī Dynasty*, he changes course slightly and writes that in the early part of Shāh ‘Abbās I’s reign, the Abdālī “moved to the neighbouring province of Herat because of pressure from the Ghalzais.”⁸⁰ In suggesting that the Ghilzay pressured the Abdālī to move from Qandahar to Herat, Lockhart seems to have followed the lead of Raverty, who states that Shāh ‘Abbās I named Sadō “Mir-i Afaghina” and that this investiture “enabled Mir Sado to free his tribe from the predominance of the Ghalzis.”⁸¹

⁷⁷ Maḥmūd al-Mūsawī, *Aḥwāl-i aqwām-i chahārgāna-i Afghān*, fols. 4b–5a.

⁷⁸ Sulṭān Muḥammad, *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī*, 58.

⁷⁹ Lockhart, *Nadir Shah*, 2.

⁸⁰ Lockhart, *The Fall of the Ṣafavī Dynasty*, 95; see also Noelle, *State and Tribe*, 161.

⁸¹ Raverty, *Notes on Afghanistan and Baluchistan*, 603.

Lockhart's view that the Ghilzay coerced the Abdālī to relocate to Herat may also be derived from the post-Safavid Persian chronicle, the *Fawā'id al-Ṣafawīyya*, composed by Abū al-Ḥasan Qazwīnī, who suggests that the Abdālī had historically been subjects of the Ghilzay. An Abdālī leader named Sadō later requested permission from Shāh 'Abbās II to relocate from the frontiers of Qandahar and Kabul to Herat. It was thus through the intercession of Sadō that the Abdālī moved to Herat where they faithfully served the Safavid monarchy. This remained the case until the Ghilzay insurrection, at which time the Abdālī took control over the province of Herat.⁸²

Another post-Safavid Persian chronicle that alleges an early connection between the Abdālī and Herat is the *Majma' al-tawārīkh*. Its author, Muḥammad Khalīl, who was a contemporary of Abū al-Ḥasan Qazwīnī, writes that the Abdālī originally dwelled in the mountains of the Kabul region and, on account of various events (*ba'zī az ḥawādīs*) that are left unspecified, they migrated to Herat in the year 1000/1591–92.⁸³ Muḥammad Khalīl's statement is repeated in the studies of Kamal Khan and Noelle-Karimi.⁸⁴

Another later source that suggests a historical connection between the Abdālī and Herat is Imām al-Dīn Ḥusaynī Chishtī's *Ḥusayn Shāhī*. As his *nisba* indicates, the author was a member of the Chishtī Sufi Order, which is named after the village of Chisht to the east of

⁸² Abū al-Ḥasan Qazwīnī, *Fawā'id al-Ṣafawīyya*, 158–59.

⁸³ Muḥammad Khalīl, *Majma' al-tawārīkh*, 19.

⁸⁴ See Kamal Khan, *Rise of Saddozais*, 141; Noelle-Karimi, *The Abdali Afghans*, 35; Noelle-Karimi, *The Pearl in Its Midst*, 81, 176. On p. 81 of *The Pearl in Its Midst*, Noelle also states: "The *Tadhkirat al-mulūk-i 'ālīsha'n* reports that Hayat Sultan's maternal ancestors belonged to the Nurzai tribe and had moved to Auba and the Du Shakh mountain west of Herat at some point in the past." This statement is taken from the study of Kamal Khan. I have been unable to locate any such reference to the Nūrzay having moved to Ūba (Auba) and Dū Shākh in the TMA.

Herat where it was founded in the ninth century.⁸⁵ In light of his connection to the Chishtī Order, it is not surprising that Imām al-Dīn sought to relate the Abdālī to Abū Aḥmad “Abdāl” Chishtī, one of the early *Khwājas* of Chisht who was active in the tenth century and said to be responsible for helping lay the foundations of the Chishtī Order.⁸⁶ According to Imām al-Dīn, the progenitor of the Abdālī, Abdāl b. Tarīn, originally had a different name (*dar āghāz nām-i dīgar dāsht*) before becoming a disciple (*murīd*) of Abū Aḥmad. Supposedly on account of his spiritual giftedness, Abū Aḥmad conferred the lofty title of *abdāl* upon him. He became known as Abdāl and his progeny were referred to collectively as Abdālī thereafter.⁸⁷ In this way, Imām al-Dīn provides a convenient explanation for the origins of the tribal name Abdālī—a complex topic that will be treated further in Chapter 3.

Beyond these stray references, there is little evidence in the primary sources to suggest there was a noticeable Abdālī presence in Herat prior to the eighteenth century. In fact, the main Abdālī genealogical histories like the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* and the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān*, as well as contemporary Safavid and Mughal chronicles, consistently

⁸⁵ For more on Chisht as the birthplace of the Chishtiyya, i.e., the Chishtī Order, see *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. “Češtiya” (by Gerhard Böwering); Lawrence G. Potter, “Sufis and Sultans in Post-Mongol Iran,” *Iranian Studies* 27, nos. 1–4 (1994): 80–96. Although the Order was founded in Chisht, its flowering took place in India after it was brought there by Khwāja Mu‘īn al-Dīn Chishtī (ca. 536–633/1141–1236). Chisht continued to be a popular shrine town in Herat until it was superseded in importance by the Anṣārī shrine at Gāzurgāh beginning in the fifteenth century (see note 96 below).

⁸⁶ In the *Nafaḥāt al-uns*, Jāmī describes both Abū Aḥmad and his father Sulṭān Firisnāfa as contemporaries of Abū Ishāq Shāmī, widely considered the founder of the Chishtī Order; see Nūr al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Jāmī, *Nafaḥāt al-uns min ḥazarāt al-quds*, ed. Mahdī Tawḥīdīpūr (Tehran: Sa’dī, 1336 H.sh./1958), 323–24. Later sources like the *Siyar al-aqtāb* and the *Siyar al-awliyā’* build upon Jāmī’s description and add that Abū Aḥmad was Abū Ishāq’s disciple and spiritual successor; see Allāh Diya Chishtī, *Khwājagān-i Chisht: Siyar al-aqtāb*, ed. Muḥammad Sarwar Mawlā’ī (Tehran: ‘Ilm, 1386 H.sh./2007), 58–59, 61; Muḥammad ibn Mubārak Kirmānī Amīr Kh^wurd, *Siyar al-awliyā’* (Delhi, 1302/1885), 40. Abū Aḥmad was one of the early *Khwājas* (*khwājagān*) of Chisht venerated for their sanctity by later Chishtī communities; in addition to the *Siyar al-aqtāb* and the *Siyar al-awliyā’*, also see: Potter, “Sufis and Sultans in Post-Mongol Iran,” 86–88.

⁸⁷ Imām al-Dīn, *Ḥusayn Shāhī*, fol. 6b. For more on Khwāja Abū Aḥmad “Abdāl,” see *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. “Abdāl Češti” (by M. Imam).

locate the Abdālī not in Herat but in the Qandahar region.⁸⁸ The Herat argument is not supported by the *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, the court-chronicle commissioned by Aḥmad Shāh, which indicates the Abdālī had, “since ancient times,” (*az qadīm al-ayyām*) nomadized between the highlands of Zamīndāwar and Qandahar in the west and Ghazni and Kabul in the east.⁸⁹ The general lack of supporting evidence gives reason to doubt the theory posited by post-Safavid authors that the Abdālī either inhabited or built up a strong presence in the province of Herat since the reign of Shāh ‘Abbās I.⁹⁰ Moreover, as will be argued later, the process by which the chiefs of the Abdālī confederacy established their rule over Herat was facilitated by, and closely intertwined with, the breakdown of Safavid political authority in the province, which occurred in the early eighteenth century; this would explain the absence of reliable data on the Abdālī presence in Herat prior to the eighteenth century.

But if the Abdālī relocated to Herat in the eighteenth century, why do post-Safavid authors like Muḥammad Khalīl, Imām al-Dīn, and others imply that this event took place earlier? Taking a step back to consider the context in which these works were written may provide insight.

⁸⁸ Some sources indicate the Abdālī were also in Multan beginning in the second half of the seventeenth century. A. M. K. Durrani traces the Abdālī presence in Multan to the lifetime of Shāh Ḥusayn Khān, who is said to have fled there in 1059/1649 after a dispute with his rival, Sulṭān Khudādād; see Durrani, *Multān under the Afghāns*, 14–15. The section of the TMA preserved in the British Library manuscript only states that Shāh Ḥusayn Khān and his family migrated to Hindustan; see ‘Alī Muḥammad Khān, *Taẓkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shāh*, fol. 26b. It is also worth noting that the TMA does not refer to an Abdālī presence in Herat at this time.

⁸⁹ The entire passage, discussed further in Chapter 6, reads: “Since ancient times, this noble people [i.e. the Abdālī-Durrānī] occupied summer and winter quarters (*aylāq-nishīn wa qishlāq-nishīn mī-dāshtand*) in ‘the established abode’ (*dār al-qarār*) of Qandahar, Zamīndāwar, Tōbā, and the mountainous lands from Qarābāgh and Ghaznīn to the heart-pleasing country of Kabul.” See Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, ed. Murādōf, 1:11a–13a. The TASH refers to Aḥmad Shāh’s father Zamān Khān exercising rule over Herat for a time, but this only occurred after the Abdālī relocated there in the early eighteenth century.

⁹⁰ Even if some Abdālī pastoral-nomads may have hypothetically partaken in seasonal migrations to Herat, no reliable evidence has yet surfaced in support of this surmise.

It is important to emphasize that the works of Abū al-Ḥasan, Muḥammad Khalīl, and Imām al-Dīn which locate the Abdālī in Herat were all composed in the late-eighteenth century. Like other Iranian authors writing in the post-Safavid period, one of the primary aims of Abū al-Ḥasan and Muḥammad Khalīl was to explain the overthrow of the Safavid dynasty by the Ghilzay Afghans. Their narratives of events thus focus more on the early eighteenth century and take the Ghilzay presence in Qandahar and the Abdālī presence in Herat for granted. Muḥammad Khalīl gives 1000/1592–93 as the year the Abdālī moved to Herat but he does not identify his source of information.⁹¹ Abū al-Ḥasan suggests the Abdālī relocated to Herat several decades later, during the reign Shāh ‘Abbās II in the mid-seventeenth century. Curiously, neither author bothers to explain the reasons for the move nor do they describe activities of the Abdālī in Qandahar prior to the Ghilzay takeover in 1121/1709 in any detail. From the superficiality of their accounts of the Abdālī, it is evident that neither Abū al-Ḥasan nor Muḥammad Khalīl was well versed or even interested in the early history of the Abdālī. As such, both authors appear to have projected the specifically eighteenth-century Abdālī-Ghilzay political rivalry, which was a pivotal factor behind the Ghilzay takeover of Qandahar and the concomitant Abdālī relocation to Herat, onto the more distant past.

In his *Ḥusayn Shāhī*, Imām al-Dīn traces the Abdālī presence in Herat several centuries earlier than Abū al-Ḥasan and Muḥammad Khalīl. Concerning the confederacy’s early history, Imām al-Dīn suggests that its putative eponymous founder, Abdāl b. Tarīn, was a disciple of Abū Aḥmad Abdāl, one of the patron saints of Chisht. The author’s brief and

⁹¹ In an earlier passage, Muḥammad Khalīl refers to an old enmity that existed between the two tribes (*fī mā-bayn-i firqa-i Abdālī wa Ghilza’i ‘adāwatī az sābiq būd*), though he does not indicate that this was a direct cause for the Abdālī moving to Herat; see Muḥammad Khalīl, *Majma‘ al-tawārīkh*, 3, 9. Mahdī Khān Astarābādī also takes for granted the Ghilzay presence in Qandahar and the Abdālī presence in Herat in his *TN*, which, not coincidentally, is one of the main sources Muḥammad Khalīl relied on; see Mahdī Khān, *Jahāngushā-yi Nādirī*, 2.

lacunose account of Abdāl says nothing of the Abdālī in Qandahar and seems to take the confederacy's presence in Herat for granted. By associating the Abdālī with the locale of Chisht in Herat and neglecting to mention their activities in Qandahar altogether, Imām al-Dīn seems to imply that the Abdālī were active in the Herat region since the time of Abū Aḥmad in the tenth century. However, once again, it appears the author projected the later reality of a noticeable Abdālī presence in Herat back in time.

One may discern a latent political dimension to Imām al-Dīn's claim that has hitherto gone unnoticed. The author completed his history in 1213/1798, which coincides with the reign of Zamān Shāh Durrānī. In 1796, Āghā Muḥammad Khān Qājār took control of Mashhad and deposed its Durrānī puppet ruler, Shāhrukh Shāh Afshār. He then sent a message to Zamān Shāh bidding him to summon his officials from, and relinquish control of, the territory of Khurasan between Mashhad and Balkh.⁹² At the time, Zamān Shāh was in the Punjab and, upon learning of Āghā Muḥammad's advances, he immediately made preparations to return to Herat and defend it. The conflict was temporarily averted when the Qājār ruler departed Mashhad to deal with affairs in western Iran but it was resumed under Āghā Muḥammad's nephew and successor Faṭḥ 'Alī Shāh (r. 1211–50/1797–1834), who made similar claims concerning the rightful authority of the Qājārs to rule over Herat and the other Durrānī centres of Khurasan.⁹³

Imām al-Dīn happened to be in the retinue of Zamān Shāh in the Punjab in 1211/1796–97 when the news came of Āghā Muḥammad's capture of Mashhad. In the *Husayn*

⁹² Muḥammad Taqī Sipīhr, *Nāsikh al-tawārikh: Tārīkh-i Qājāriyya*, ed. Jamshīd Kiyānfār, 3 vols. in 2 (Tehran: Asāṭīr, 1377 H.sh./1998), 1:81.

⁹³ For further details about early stages of the Durrānī-Qājār conflict over Herat from 1796–1818, see David Charles Champagne, "The Afghan-Iranian Conflict over Herat Province and European Intervention 1796–1863: A Reinterpretation" (PhD diss., University of Texas at Austin, 1981), 48–87; Noelle-Karimi, *The Pearl in Its Midst*, 194–99.

Shāhī, the author states that it was during his time at the court of Zamān Shāh that he began to write his history, which was eventually completed in Lucknow in 1213/1798.⁹⁴ Imām al-Dīn was likely privy to the aspirations of the Qājārs to take control of Herat while writing the *Ḥusayn Shāhī*. By arguing that the spiritual lineage of his royal patron, Zamān Shāh, went all the way back to one of the revered patron saints of Chisht, Abū Aḥmad Abdāl, the author seems to have been motivated by the desire to bolster Durrānī claims to rule over Herat and to counter the irredentist claims made by the Qājārs.⁹⁵ In pre-modern Central Asian contexts, it was fairly common for rulers to associate themselves with sacred shrines and/or Sufi saints for some political or socio-political end.⁹⁶ Moreover, as a learned member of the Chishtī Order, Imām al-Dīn would have been seen by Zamān Shāh as the ideal person to establish such an association.

The narrative agenda of Imām al-Dīn helps explain the otherwise unsubstantiated claim that the tribal name Abdālī, which is of uncertain origin, was derived from Khwāja Abū Aḥmad's epithet *abdāl*, which is an Arabo-Persian technical term referring to one of

⁹⁴ Imām al-Dīn, *Ḥusayn Shāhī*, fols. 3b–5b.

⁹⁵ For details on the claims of Faṭḥ ‘Alī Shāh and the Qājārs to authority over Khurasan, see Rizā Qulī Khān Hidāyat, *Tārīkh-i Rawzat al-ṣafā-yi Nāṣirī*, 10 vols. (Tehran: Markazī-i Khayyām Pīrūz, 1339 H.sh./1960), 10:30–31 passim; Wakīlī Pōpalza’ī, *Durrat al-zamān fī tārikh-i Shāh Zamān* (Kabul: Maṭba‘a-i Dawlatī, 1337 H.sh./1958), 138–44; and Noelle-Karimi, *The Pearl in Its Midst*, 199.

⁹⁶ A pertinent example would be the case of the Timurid ruler Sulṭān-Ḥusayn Bayqara (873–911/1469–1506), who not only helped oversee the project, begun under his ancestors, of reviving the shrine of Khwāja ‘Abd Allāh Anṣārī (d. 481/1089), popularly known as the patron saint of Herat, or Pīr-i Herāt, at Gāzurgāh but even went so far as to claim descent from him. See Maria E. Subtelny, “The Cult of ‘Abdullāh Anṣārī under the Timurids,” in *Gott ist schön und Er liebt die Schönheit/God Is Beautiful and He Loves Beauty: Festschrift in Honour of Annemarie Schimmel*, ed. Alma Giese and J. Christoph Bürgel (Bern: Peter Lang, 1994), 388–91; Subtelny, *Timurids in Transition*, 44–46, 201–5; also see Robert D. McChesney, *Central Asia: Foundations of Change* (Princeton, NJ: Darwin, 1996), 84–87. In many cases, such connections would also be drawn to bolster claims of certain descent groups to various special prerogatives, including property rights. See DeWeese, “The Politics of Sacred Lineages,” 507–30; and Devin DeWeese, “Sacred Descent and Sufi Legitimation in a Genealogical Text from Eighteenth-Century Central Asia: The Sharaf Atā’ī Tradition in Khwārazm,” in *Sayyids and Sharifs in Muslim Societies: The Living Links to the Prophet*, ed. Kazuo Morimoto (New York: Routledge, 2012), 210–30.

higher ranks in the hierarchy of saints in Islamic mysticism.⁹⁷ It is not based on any long-standing tradition and the *Ḥusayn Shāhī* is, to my knowledge, the earliest known source to assert that Abdāl b. Tarīn was a disciple of Abū Aḥmad Abdāl. The fact that Imām al-Dīn's historical account of the Abdālī in Herat is brief and inaccurate does not inspire confidence in the reliability of his claim about the confederacy's connection to the Chishtī saint.⁹⁸ Despite the lack of supporting evidence, several authors writing on the authority of the *Ḥusayn Shāhī* or one of the many works that are based upon it have assumed the authenticity of the Abdālī-Chishtī connection and it has become a stock feature of writings about the Abdālī.⁹⁹

The foregoing analysis indicates that by the late-eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, an array of accounts about early Abdālī history could be found in the historical record. The numerous factual discrepancies between them reflect the fact that, at the time, Abdālī tradition was still in flux and a single, "authoritative" version of the confederacy's past had yet to take shape in the historiography. While the accounts agree that a large-scale Abdālī migration from Qandahar to Herat occurred prior to the eighteenth century, they generally disagree about when exactly this migration was supposed to have taken place. And though such claims are not corroborated with any evidence from contemporary primary

⁹⁷ See *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., s.v. "Abdāl" (by H. J. Kissling); *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. "Abdāl" (by J. Chabbi).

⁹⁸ As an example, Imām al-Dīn refers to the Sadōzay ruler of Herat, 'Abd Allāh Khān, as the grandfather (*jadd*) of Aḥmad Shāh; see Imām al-Dīn, *Ḥusayn Shāhī*, fol. 8b. But we know that Aḥmad Shāh's grandfather was, in fact, named Dawlat Khān; see Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, ed. Murādōf, 1:12b. Moreover, as noted in the TMA, 'Abd Allāh Khān belonged to a collateral line of the Sadōzay lineage.

⁹⁹ See 'Abd al-Karīm 'Alawī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad*, fac. ed., 3; Ḥayāt Khān, *Ḥayāt-i Afghānī*, 121; Zardār Khān, *Ṣawlat-i Afghānī*, 336; Ḥabībī, "Da Abdāliyanū Mashāhīr," 202; Jadunath Sarkar, *Fall of the Mughal Empire*, 4 vols. (Calcutta, 1932–50), 1:111n; Singh, *Aḥmad Shah Durrani*, 1n; Lockhart, *The Fall of the Ṣafavī Dynasty*, 95–96; *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., s.v. "Abdālī" (by L. Lockhart); *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. "Abdālī" (by C.M. Kieffer); Wakīlī Pōpalza'i, *Timūr Shāh Durrānī*, 1:21; Gommans, *The Rise of the Indo-Afghan Empire*, 50n17; Noelle, *State and Tribe*, 229; Noelle-Karimi, *The Pearl in Its Midst*, 81; Kamal Khan, *Rise of Saddozais*, 33.

sources, several authors have nevertheless embraced the notion of a large-scale Abdālī migration to Herat prior to the eighteenth century. To briefly review, Lockhart accepts the anachronistic portrayal of the Abdālī relocating to Herat in the reign of Shāh ‘Abbās I on account of “pressure from” the Ghilzay even though there is no evidence of Ghilzay-Abdālī tensions or any other factors that would have caused the Abdālī to migrate on a considerable scale to Herat in the seventeenth century. Abū al-Ḥasan also indicates that the Abdālī migrated to Herat but suggests this took place later, in the reign of Shāh ‘Abbās II. Kamal Khan and Noelle-Karimi reproduce Muḥammad Khalīl’s assertion that the Abdālī relocated to Herat in 1000/1591–92, even though he offers no credible explanation for the relocation and, moreover, clearly had limited knowledge of the history of the Abdālī let alone their past migration patterns. The various authors that have reproduced the reference to the Abdālī-Chishtī connection posited by Imām al-Dīn tend to overlook the lack of evidence in support of the claim, its ideological motives, and the bulk of evidence suggesting that, prior to the breakdown of Safavid rule in the early 1700s, the Abdālī did not inhabit the Herat region. Rather, the bulk of available historical evidence suggests that the Abdālī nomadized in the highlands straddling Qandahar and Multan and that this expansive mountainous tract not only represents the confederacy’s earliest attested habitation but also its primary habitation until the early-eighteenth century.

2.4: Conclusions

This study of the sources and scholarship as they relate specifically to the Abdālī shows that the history of the Abdālī confederacy, particularly in the pre-Durrānī period, has been an oft-neglected subject. The overview of primary sources examines and contextualizes a number of genealogical histories related to the Abdālī, many of which

remain poorly understood despite providing the best available accounts of the confederacy's past. The review of literature surveys some of the finding of various authors about the Abdālī while at the same time pointing out some misconceptions in the existing scholarship that this thesis will endeavor to address. This chapter has demonstrated the need for a revision of the early history of the Abdālī in the light of obscure sources that have often been overlooked in studies of the tribal confederacy.

Among the problems in the scholarship that this project seeks to address is the lack of a comparative and systematic approach to the sources about the Abdālī and the tendency to take the information in them at face value without subjecting them to critical analysis. To address the misconceptions that then arise, this thesis will utilize a wider array of sources on the Abdālī. This includes the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* and the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ʿālī-shān*, which provide relatively detailed accounts of early Abdālī history but that have yet to be studied alongside one another in their original Persian. To help make sense of the inconsistencies and contradictions between their respective narratives of the Abdālī, the two works will not be taken at face value, nor will one be considered more accurate than the other. Instead they will be understood as representing distinct yet coeval traditions of Abdālī history. They will also be read as complex texts consisting of mythical, historical, and ideological elements. Finally, they will be engaged with the understanding that they offer retrospective and romanticized portrayals of the Abdālī (or more precisely, Sadōzay) past.

Notwithstanding their obvious shortcomings, works like the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* and the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ʿālī-shān* are among the most informative locally produced sources available on the early history of the Abdālī in the pre-Durrānī period. They will be analyzed alongside other primary sources, including contemporary chronicles written at the Safavid and Mughal courts, and attempts will be made to compare, contrast, and, where possible,

reconcile the data found in the different sources. The main objective of this critical, comparative approach to the source material is to supply a more accurate chronological narrative of Abdālī history than presently exists in the scholarly literature.

Chapter 3: The Pre-History of the Abdālī

3.1: The Hephthalite Hypothesis

The general lack of data about the Abdālī in sources dating from the pre-Durrānī era has given rise to various theories about their early history. One recurring hypothesis is that the Abdālī may have been associated with the Hephthalites (Arabic Hayṭal, or Hayāṭila in its plural form), a confederacy of so-called “Hunnic” tribes that entered Central Asia in the late fourth-century CE and exercised rule over parts of Central and South Asia, including much of present-day Afghanistan, until they were gradually displaced in early Islamic times.¹

English-language authors of the colonial period were among the first to speculate about a direct relationship between the Abdālī and the Hephthalites. In the preface to his travelogue, originally published in 1844, Charles Masson wrote: “When we find that the white Huns of ancient history, the Euthalites of classical authors, were named Hephthāls, by Armenian authors, we might infer that the Abdālī or modern Dūrānīs, are no other than descendants of that powerful people.”² Henry W. Bellew later added: “The name Abdāl or

¹ For important studies on the Hephthalites, see Roman Ghirshman, *Les Chionites-Hephthalites* (Cairo: Imprimerie de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, 1948); B. A. Litvinski, “The Hephthalite Empire,” in *History of Civilizations of Central Asia*, vol. 3, *The Crossroads of Civilization: A.D. 250 to 750*, ed. B. A. Litvinski (Paris: UNESCO, 1996), 135–62; A. H. Dani, B. A. Litvinski, and M. H. Zamir Safi, “Eastern Kushans, Kidarites in Gandhara and Kashmir, and Later Hephthalites,” in *History of Civilizations of Central Asia*, vol. 3, *The Crossroads of Civilization: A.D. 250 to 750*, ed. B. A. Litvinski (Paris: UNESCO, 1996), 163–83; C. E. Bosworth, “The Coming of Islam to Afghanistan,” in *Islam in Asia*, vol. 1, *South Asia*, ed. Yohanan Friedmann (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1984), 1–22; C. E. Bosworth, “The Appearance and Establishment of Islam in Afghanistan,” in *Islamisation de l'Asie Centrale: Processus locaux d'acculturation du VIIe au XIe siècle*, ed. Étienne de La Vaissière (Paris: Association pour l'Avancement des Études Iranienne, 2008), 97–114; Christopher I. Beckwith, *Empires of the Silk Road* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), 102, 116, 122–23, 132–33; and Aydogdy Kurbanov, “The Hephthalites: Archaeological and Historical Analysis” (PhD diss., Free University of Berlin, 2010).

² Charles Masson, *Narrative of Various Journeys in Balochistan, Afghanistan, the Panjab, & Kalat, during a Residence in those Countries: To which is Added an Account of the Insurrection at Kalat, and a Memoir on Eastern Balochistan*, 4 vols. (London: Richard Bentley, 1844; repr. ed., New York: Oxford University Press, 1974–77), 1:xiii; Caroe, *The Pathans*, 90.

Awdāl is supposed to represent the *Abtila* Hun (Haital, pl. Hayàtila), the Ephthalites and Nepthalites of Byzantine writers.”³ Several authors have since invoked the purported Abdālī-Hephthalite relationship. This includes Afghan historians ‘Abd al-Ḥayy Ḥabībī and Muḥammad Anwar Nayyir.⁴ Other scholars, including George P. Tate, Kazuo Enoki and Yuri Gankovsky, have mentioned the Abdālī-Hephthalite connection in passing, while the linguist Georg Morgenstierne accepted the possibility of the tribal name Abdālī “having something to do with” Hayṭal.⁵ Joseph Arlinghaus describes the Abdālī as one of a number of Afghan tribal groups that “may also have been part” of the Hephthalite confederacy.⁶ In his recent doctoral dissertation, Aydogdy Kurbanov indicates that, following the collapse of their confederacy, the Hephthalites likely assimilated into other populations of Central and South Asia and that the Abdālī may represent one of many ethnic groups of Hephthalite origin.⁷

Owing to a lack of data, the self-designation of the Hephthalites is unknown.⁸ Thus, the hypotheses posited by the above authors hinge in large part on the supposition that the

³ Henry Walter Bellew, *An Inquiry into the Ethnography of Afghanistan* (Woking, 1891; repr., Karachi: Indus, 1977), 158.

⁴ Ḥabībī, “Da Abdāliyānū Mashāhīr,” 200–1; Muḥammad Anwar Nayyir, “Abdālī, Sadōzāyy, Durrānī,” *Āryānā* 22, nos. 11–12 (1343 H.sh./1964–65): 76–78.

⁵ Tate, *The Kingdom of Afghanistan*, 19; Kazuo Enoki, “On the Nationality of the Ephthalites,” *Memoirs of the Research Department of the Toyo Bunko* 18 (1959): 56; Yuri Gankovsky, *The Peoples of Pakistan: An Ethnic History* (Moscow: Nauka, 1971), 127n107; Georg Morgenstierne, “The Linguistic Stratification of Afghanistan,” *Afghan Studies* 2 (1979): 29.

⁶ Arlinghaus, “The Transformation of Afghan Tribal Society,” 66–67.

⁷ Kurbanov, “The Hephthalites,” 239–43.

⁸ There is much obscurity surrounding the ethno-linguistic identity of the Hephthalites. This is due to the lack of native Hephthalite sources and the fact that much of the extant information on the confederacy derives from sources written by non-Hephthalite authors in Chinese, Greek, Indian, Arabic and other languages. According to the sixth century Byzantine author Procopius of Caesarea, the Hephthalites were a group of Huns distinguished from other Hunnic peoples by, among other things, their white complexion, hence their appellation “White Huns”; see H. B. Dewing, ed. and trans., *Procopius: History of the Wars*, 6 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1914–40), 1:12–15. The Hephthalites also appear to be related to the tribes that later

tribal name of the Abdālī is related to one or more of the names associated with the Hephthalites in the polyglot pre- and early-Islamic sources.⁹ This includes the Greco-Bactrian word “ἡβόδαλο” or “Ebodalo” meaning “Hephthalite.”¹⁰ As the tenth-century historian Abū ‘Alī Muḥammad Bal‘amī (d. 363/974) indicates, the Arabic name for Hephthalite, “Hayṭal,” is derived from the word meaning “strong man” (*mard-i qawī*) in the language of Bukhara (*zabān-i Bukhārā*).¹¹ According to Harold W. Bailey, the Bukharan term is

entered the lands south of the Hindu Kush and that are referred to in Indian sources as “śveta-hūṇa” or “white Huns”; see H. W. Bailey, “Hārahūṇa,” in *Asiatica: Festschrift Friedrich Weller zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Johannes Schubert (Leipzig: Otto Harrassowitz, 1954), 12–16; Litvinski, “The Hephthalite Empire,” 136; Dani, Litvinski, and Safi, “Eastern Kushans, Kidarites in Gandhara and Kashmir, and Later Hephthalites,” 169. Addressing Procopius’s statements, Beckwith has suggested that the Central Asian Hephthalites were apparently distinct from the Huns of the Western Steppe and Eastern Europe and that the application of the name “Huns” to them “seems to be either a misnomer or a generic usage”; see Beckwith, *Empires of the Silk Road*, 19–20n75, 406n. Concerning the language of the Hephthalites, scholars have long speculated that they spoke an eastern Iranian tongue distinct from the Bactrian language. However in more recent times the theory that they spoke a Turkish language has gained traction. On account of the scarcity of information on the topic, it is difficult to arrive at definitive conclusions about the language of the Hephthalites. For more on the ongoing debates about language of the Hephthalites, see Kurbanov, “The Hephthalites,” 221–31; Litvinsky, “The Hephthalite Empire,” 148–49; A. D. H. Bivar, “The History of Eastern Iran,” in *The Cambridge History of Iran*, vol. 3, pt. 1, *The Seleucid, Parthian and Sasanian Periods*, ed. Ehsan Yarshater (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 213; Nicholas Sims-Williams, “Ancient Afghanistan and Its Invaders: Linguistic Evidence from the Bactrian Documents and Inscriptions,” in *Indo-Iranian Languages and Peoples*, ed. Nicholas Sims-Williams (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 233–34. On the debates surrounding the origins of the Hephthalites, see especially Enoki, “On the Nationality of the Ephthalites,” 1–56; Étienne de La Vaissière, “Is there a ‘Nationality of the Hephthalites?’” *Bulletin of the Asia Institute* 17 (2007): 119–32.

⁹ A concise survey of the names used for the Hephthalites in the polyglot sources is given in Barthold, *An Historical Geography of Iran*, 19–20; Litvinski, “The Hephthalite Empire,” 135; Kurbanov, “The Hephthalites,” 1–2.

¹⁰ Sims-Williams, “Ancient Afghanistan and Its Invaders,” 233–34.

¹¹ For Bal‘amī’s reference to the Hayṭal, see Abū ‘Alī Muḥammad Bal‘amī, *Tārīkh-nāma-i Ṭabarī: Gardānīda’i mansūb bi Bal‘amī*, ed. Muḥammad Rōshan, 5 vols. (Tehran: Surūsh, 1389 H.sh./2010), 1:657. For Ṭabarī’s account of the Hayāṭila and their dealings with the Sāsānians that Bal‘amī drew upon, see Muḥammad ibn Jarīr ibn Yazīd al-Ṭabarī, *The History of al-Ṭabarī (Ta’rīkh al-rusul wa’l-mulūk): Volume 5, The Sāsānids, the Byzantines, the Lakhmids, and Yemen*, trans. C. E. Bosworth (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999), 107, 110–11, 136, 152, 160.

related to the Khotan Saka term “*hītala-tsaa-*” meaning “strong” or “heroic.”¹² Kurbanov notes that the ancient Uyghur word pronounced “Aptal” bears the similar meaning of “hero” or “strong person.”¹³ Building on the idea of Wilhelm Tomaschek, W. Barthold noted that the Greek (Αβδελαί=Abdelai), Syriac (Abdel), and Armenian (Heptal) transcriptions of the term indicate that the Arabic Hayṭal/Hayāṭila should be read Habṭal/Habāṭila.¹⁴ In light of their striking similarities, it would be tempting to view the tribal name of the Abdālī as deriving ultimately from one of the cognate terms used for the Hephthalites.

But the Abdālī are not the only people supposedly associated with the Hephthalites on account of sharing a similar name with them. In recent times scholars have also drawn connections between the Turkmen Abdals and the Hephthalites.¹⁵ There is evidence that tribes with dissimilar names may have been related to the Hephthalites, too. In the *Mafātih al-ʿulūm*, the late tenth-century author al-Khwārazmī writes that the Khalaj Turks, a tribal people settled in the vicinity of Ghazni as early as the tenth century, were remnants of the Hayāṭila.¹⁶ In his study of the Khalaj, Minorsky refers to an earlier Syriac chronicle that was

¹² H. W. Bailey, “North Iranian Problems,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 42, no. 2 (1979): 208; H. W. Bailey, *Dictionary of Khotan Saka* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 482; Litvinski, “The Hephthalite Empire,” 135.

¹³ Litvinski, “The Hephthalite Empire,” 135; Kurbanov, “The Hephthalites,” 31.

¹⁴ Barthold, *An Historical Geography of Iran*, 20; Wilhelm Tomaschek, “Kritik die ältesten Nachrichten über den skythischen Norden. I.,” *Sitzungsberichte der Philosophisch-Historischen Classe der Kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften* 116 (1888): 751.

¹⁵ Gunnar Jarring, *On the Distribution of Turk Tribes in Afghanistan: An Attempt at a Preliminary Classification* (Lund: Gleerup, 1939), 38, 56; see Richard N. Frye and Aydin M. Sayili, “Turks in the Middle East Before the Saljuqs,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 63, no. 3 (1943): 205n156; Gankovsky, *The Peoples of Pakistan*, 126–27; Kurbanov, “The Hephthalites,” 31–32, 241–42.

¹⁶ See Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad Khwārizmī, *Liber Mafātih al-olūm, explicans vocabula technica scientiarum tam Arabum quam peregrinorum, auctore Abū Abdallah Mohammed Ahmed ibn Jūsuf al-Kātib al-Khowarezmi*, ed. Gerlof van Vloten (Leiden, 1895), 119–20. For a translation of the section in question, see C. E. Bosworth and Gerard Clauson, “Al-Xwārazmi on the Peoples of Central Asia,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* 1, no. 2 (1965): 6. The Khalaj-Hephthalite connection is also discussed in Joseph Marquart, *Ērānšahr nach*

composed in 554–55 CE and refers to “Khulas,” “Abdel,” and “Ephthalite” as nomadic tribes dwelling in and around the “lands of the Huns.”¹⁷ Minorsky also mentions Marquart’s theory in *Ērānšahr* connecting the Khulas mentioned in the Syriac chronicle to the Khalaj.¹⁸ This early reference to the Khalaj alongside the Hephthalites implies a relationship that dates as far back as the sixth century and supports al-Khwārazmī’s statement that the two peoples remained closely associated in later times.¹⁹ Arlinghaus endorses the Khulas-Khalaj equation while also identifying the “Abdel” described in the Syriac chronicle as Abdālī; in this way, he insinuates that the Abdālī may have been associated with the Hephthalites.²⁰

On account of their relation to the Khalaj Turks, some scholars have contended that the Hephthalites were Turkish.²¹ But as Nicholas Sims-Williams has remarked, this view rests on uncertain footing primarily because the Turkish identity of the Hephthalites has not

der Geographie des Ps. Moses Xorenac’i (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1901), 251–54; Dani, Litvinski, and Safi, “Eastern Kushans, Kidarites in Gandhara and Kashmir, and Later Hephthalites,” 179–82.

¹⁷ F. J. Hamilton and E. W. Brooks, trans., *The Syriac Chronicle Known as that of Zachariah of Mitylene* (London, 1899), 328.

¹⁸ While Minorsky asserts that Marquart insisted on connecting the Khulas/Khalaj to the Hephthalites, Sims-Williams rightly notes that Marquart does not, in fact, commit to this view; see V. Minorsky, “The Turkish Dialect of the Khalaj,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies* 10, no. 2 (1940): 426–27; Marquart, *Ērānšahr*, 253; Sims-Williams, “Ancient Afghanistan and Its Invaders,” 234n27.

¹⁹ Marquart, *Ērānšahr*, 253; Enoki, “On the Nationality of the Ephthalites,” 56.

²⁰ Arlinghaus, “The Transformation of Afghan Tribal Society,” 66.

²¹ The view that the Hephthalites were Turks is endorsed in Frye and Sayili, “Turks in the Middle East Before the Saljuqs,” 198–99, 204–7. This opinion is based on the fact that early-Islamic Arabic sources tend to describe the Hephthalites as Turks. But Sims-Williams argues this is an oversimplification that can be explained by the influx of Turkish influence after the defeat of the Hephthalites by the Sasanians and Western Turks in the middle of the sixth century. Moreover, as Bosworth notes, Arabic authors writing in early Islamic times consistently referred to the Hephthalites they encountered as “Turks” but used this label in a generic sense to mean something like “non-Persians” as opposed to ethnic Turks; see Bosworth and Clauson, “Al-Xwārazmī on the Peoples of Central Asia,” 2–4; Bosworth, “The Coming of Islam to Afghanistan,” 15. For a recent study of the historical evolution of the meaning of the term “Turk,” including its widespread use in reference to non-Turkic peoples, see Joo-Yup Lee, “The Historical Meaning of the Term *Turk* and the Nature of the Turkic Identity of the Chinggisid and Timurid Elites in Post-Mongol Central Asia,” *Central Asiatic Journal* 59, no. 1–2 (2016): 101–32.

been firmly established.²² Even if the Hephthalites were predominantly eastern-Iranian language speakers as many other scholars have speculated, the confederacy likely did not constitute an ethno-linguistic monolith but was likely comprised of various ethnic elements, including Turkish tribes like the Khalaj.²³ Moreover, the breakdown of Hephthalite rule in early Islamic times led to the dissolution of the confederacy and its component tribes appear to have contributed to the ethnic makeup of Central and South Asia, hence the abundance of theories concerning peoples of this region with alleged Hephthalite ties.²⁴ What makes the theory linking the Abdālī to the Hephthalites especially compelling is the possible survival of a local name used for the Hephthalites in the form of the tribal name “Abdālī.”

3.2: Abū Aḥmad Abdāl

Imām al-Dīn writes in the *Ḥusayn Shāhī* that the ninth-tenth century Sufi Khwāja Abū Aḥmad Chishtī bestowed his epithet “Abdāl,” which refers to his status as a Muslim saint, on

²² Bivar writes that Minorsky considered the language of the Hephthalites to be “a Turkish dialect” and that this view “holds the field at present.” However, Sims-Williams rightly points out that Minorsky does not appear to hold this view; in fact, he explicitly writes that the Khalaj Turks were “perhaps only politically associated with the Hephthalites.” See Minorsky, “The Turkish Dialect of the Khalaj,” 427–28; Bivar, “The History of Eastern Iran,” 213; and Sims-Williams, “Ancient Afghanistan and Its Invaders,” 233–34.

²³ Barthold discussed the tradition found in the compendium of the eleventh century Turkologist Maḥmūd al-Kāshgharī regarding the Khalaj comprising two of the twenty-four original Oghuz clans that separated from the Oghuz confederacy; see V. V. Barthold, *Four Studies on the History of Central Asia*, trans. V. Minorsky and T. Minorsky, vol. 3, *Mīr ‘Alī-Shīr and A History of the Turkman People* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1962), 80–81, 109. For the tradition in question, see [Maḥmūd al-Kāshgharī], *Compendium of the Turkic Dialects (Dīwān lu[gh]āt at-Turk)*, ed. and trans. Robert Dankoff, in collaboration with James Kelly, 3 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, Harvard University, 1982–85), 2:362–63. The notion of the Khalaj possibly forming a political union with the Hephthalites is discussed in Bosworth and Clauson, “Al-Xwārazmī on the Peoples of Central Asia,” 8; and Minoru Inaba, “The Identity of the Turkish Rulers to the South of Hindukush from the 7th to the 9th Centuries A.D.,” *Zinbun* 38 (2005): 15–16.

²⁴ On the various ethnic groups with possible connections to the Hephthalites, see Kurbanov, “The Hephthalites,” 239–43; Litvinsky, “The Hephthalite Empire,” 144; Gankovsky, *The Peoples of Pakistan*, 106–9, 116–18, 125–27.

the putative ancestor of the Abdālī tribal confederacy. As noted in Chapter 2, however, the tradition of Abdāl as a disciple of Abū Aḥmad is a relatively recent one that is not corroborated by earlier sources. The absence of references to this relationship in the sources does not necessarily preclude such a relationship. However, it is quite telling that neither Chishtī hagiographical literature nor the Afghan histories that predate the *Ḥusayn Shāhī* substantiate the claim that Abū Aḥmad conferred his epithet on an entire Afghan tribal confederacy. It seems more likely that, for reasons elaborated on further below, Imām al-Dīn invented this connection based on the close, albeit coincidental, resemblances between the names of both Abū Aḥmad and the Abdālī confederacy, which are of unknown origins (contrary to Imām al-Dīn's claim), and the word *abdāl*, which is of Arabic origin.

Despite the uncertain factual basis of the tradition recounted by Imām al-Dīn that traces the name of the putative ancestor of the Abdālī confederacy back to Abū Aḥmad, there may, in fact, be a less obvious correlation between the Chishtī master and the Abdālī. Specifically, if the tribal name of the Abdālī is linked to the Hephthalites, as multiple authors have speculated, an analogous argument could be made for Abū Aḥmad, who is among the earliest figures linked to the name Abdāl. This view seems all the more plausible considering there is reason to believe that Abū Aḥmad was brought up in a non-Muslim, possibly Hephthalite setting.

Like many of the early *Khawājas* of the Chishtī Order, little is known about Abū Aḥmad's life and background.²⁵ Much of the available information about him can be traced back to the *Nafahāt al-uns* of Jāmī (d. 898/1492). According to Jāmī, Abū Aḥmad's father,

²⁵ Khaliq Ahmad Nizami, an authority on the Chishtiyya, refers to a lack of authentic historical data about the pre-Indian history of the Chishtī Order, especially as it relates to early *Khawājas* like Abū Aḥmad, about whom very little is known aside from what is mentioned in the hagiographical literature. See *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., s.v. "Čishtiyya" (by K. A. Nizami).

Sulṭān Firisnāfa, was one of the nobles of Chisht (*az shurafāʾ-yi Chisht*) and the military commander of that territory (*amīr-i ān wilāyat*).²⁶ Jāmī relates the story of Abū Aḥmad joining his father on a hunting expedition in the mountains. On this excursion, Abū Aḥmad lost his way and chanced upon a company of forty “men of God,” who included Abū Ishāq Shāmī. During this encounter, Abū Aḥmad is said to have undergone a mystical experience after which he fell at the shaykh’s feet. This episode is represented as a pivotal moment that led to Abū Aḥmad becoming a disciple of Abū Ishāq. After several days of searching, Firisnāfa eventually learned of Abū Aḥmad’s whereabouts and sent a party of his men to retrieve his son; yet however much they attempted to counsel and even apprehend Abū Aḥmad by force, they were unable to bring about a change in his inner convictions (*har chand pand dādand wa band nihādand way rā az ān-chi dar ān būd bāz natawānistand āwurd*). This episode is followed up with a curious incident in which Abū Aḥmad destroyed the wine-jars (*khum-hā*) in his father’s winery (*khum-khāna*). Greatly angered by this act, Firisnāfa hurled a large stone at Abū Aḥmad but it miraculously stopped in mid-air before striking him.²⁷ The latter two incidents recounted by Jāmī clearly point to some antagonism on Firisnāfa’s part regarding Abū Aḥmad’s decision to become Abū Ishāq’s disciple and tread the mystical path.

Later Chishtī hagiographers elaborated on Jāmī’s brief account of Abū Aḥmad. For instance, in the *Siyar al-aqṭāb*, which was composed in 1036/1636, Abū Aḥmad’s father, Firisnāfa, is described as a Ḥasanī sayyid.²⁸ In the *Ḥusayn Shāh*, we are informed that the

²⁶ Jāmī, *Nafaḥāt al-uns*, ed. Tawḥīdīpūr, 323.

²⁷ Jāmī, *Nafaḥāt al-uns*, ed. Tawḥīdīpūr, 323–24.

²⁸ See Allāh Diya Chishtī, *Khawājagān-i Chisht*, 61. The description of Abū Aḥmad as a sayyid may be based in part on Jāmī’s description of Sulṭān Firisnāfa as being among the *shurafāʾ* of Chisht. But while the title *sharīf* is often used to denote the descendants of the Prophet Muḥammad through ‘Alī’s son Ḥasan, it can also simply mean “high-born” or “noble.” It is possible Jāmī used the term in the latter sense, for there is little in his account that would indicate Firisnāfa was a sayyid, as suggested by Allāh Diya and other authors.

name “Abdāl” refers to one of the ranks in the hierarchy of saints of Islamic mysticism and that Abū Aḥmad bestowed this lofty rank on the progenitor of the Abdālī confederacy.²⁹ Yet it is curious that Jāmī’s original account of Abū Aḥmad does not mention his sayyid lineage or the mystical connotations of his epithet Abdāl. This raises the question, why would Jāmī have omitted such important details? A plausible explanation is that the epithet Abdāl may be a family name and that Abū Aḥmad’s father was not a sayyid, as later authors indicate, but, in fact, a Hephthalite noble rooted in the Chisht region. This interpretation fits well with Jāmī’s description of Firisnāfa as an *amīr* belonging to the nobility of Chisht, not to mention his reference to Abū Aḥmad’s act as a devout Muslim of destroying the wine-jars in his father’s winery, which would point to Firisnāfa’s status as a non-Muslim. Indeed, the overall impression given by Jāmī’s account is that there was tension between Abū Aḥmad and his father concerning his decision to follow Abū Ishāq. Moreover, Firisnāfa’s non-Arabic, non-Muslim name, along with his status as a local *amīr* who owned a winery, hardly fits the profile of a sayyid.³⁰

It is worth pointing out that Firisnāfa was active in the ninth century when much of the eastern borderlands of the Islamic world had not yet become Islamicized. In the early Islamic period local kingdoms of Hephthalite origin remained in Khurasan and Indo-Khurasan and hindered the eastward march of the Arab-Muslim armies in the region. An example is the principality in Bādghīs—to the northeast of Herat, near Chisht—which served as the base of operation for the Hephthalite ruler Ṭarkhān Nīzak against the armies led by

²⁹ Imām al-Dīn, *Ḥusayn Shāhī*, fol. 6b.

³⁰ For more on the name Firisnāfa, which means the night of Nawrūz, the Iranian New Year, as well as some examples of its usage in classical Persian poetry, see ‘Alī Akbar Dihkhudā, *Lughat-nāma*, ed. Muḥammad Mu‘īn and Ja‘far Shahīdī, new ed., 15 vols. (Tehran: Mu‘assasa-i Intishārāt wa Chāp-i Dānishgāh-i Tihārān, 1372–73 H.sh./1993–94), 10:15059.

the Umayyad commander Qutayba b. Muslim in the eighth century.³¹ Nizak was eventually defeated and killed and Khurasan gradually gave way to Muslim rule but paganism persisted for several more centuries.³² This is attested to in Chishtī hagiographies that highlight Abū Aḥmad's role in converting the non-Muslim population of Chisht, which would likely have included Hephthalites.³³ Bearing in mind that the Hephthalite presence would still have been felt in Firisnāfa's lifetime, it is conceivable that the latter was a local Hephthalite *amīr* and that Abū Aḥmad's epithet Abdāl, which may have been a family name derived from his father, represents a form of the local name used for the Hephthalites.

The assumption that Abū Aḥmad was of Hephthalite background would explain why Jāmī neglected to mention such important details as his sayyid lineage or the mystical connotations of his epithet "Abdāl." It also suggests that Abū Aḥmad's spiritual encounter with Abū Ishāq Shāmī is to be interpreted as a conversion narrative. Although we possess little information about Abū Aḥmad's proselytizing activities in Chisht and its adjacent lands, the attention given to him in Sufi hagiographies seems to imply that he played a significant role in the conversion of the local population to Islam, Hephthalites included.³⁴ This reinterpretation would, of course, take nothing away from Abū Aḥmad's importance as an Islamizer and, hence, Muslim saint. In light of Abū Aḥmad's role as one of the revered *Khawājas* of the early Chishtī Order, it comes as no surprise that later Chishtī hagiographers

³¹ Bosworth, "The Coming of Islam to Afghanistan," 10–12; Bosworth, "The Appearance and Establishment of Islam in Afghanistan," 101–3.

³² The persistence of paganism in the region of Ghūr (just to the east of Chisht) into the eleventh century is discussed in C. E. Bosworth, "The Early Islamic History of Ghūr," *Central Asiatic Journal* 6 (1961): 116–33.

³³ Allāh Diya's work, for instance, contains anecdotes describing Abū Aḥmad's dealings with unbelievers (sing.: *kāfir*) in and around Chisht. See Allāh Diya Chishtī, *Khawājagān-i Chisht*, 63, 66.

³⁴ If so, Abū Aḥmad's role in the conversion of the Hephthalites to Islam would likely have resembled Devin DeWeese's description of Bābā Tükles, the Islamizer of the Golden Horde Mongols. For more on this topic, see Devin DeWeese, *Islamization and Native Religion in the Golden Horde: Baba Tükles and Conversion to Islam in Historical and Epic Tradition* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994).

would endeavor to bolster his Islamic credentials by claiming he was of sayyid ancestry.³⁵ Further, given its resemblance to the Arabic technical term *abdāl*, it is not surprising that the Sufi hagiographers would have sought to imbue Abū Aḥmad's epithet Abdāl with mystical significance and charisma by alleging that it referred to his lofty spiritual rank. Indeed, it would have been counterintuitive for these hagiographers to associate the epithet of such a revered Muslim saint with the pre-Islamic, pagan past.

While Jāmī's account in the *Nafahāt al-uns* provides ample reason to question the conventional views about his status as a *sayyid*, the general lack of reliable information about the early Chishtī community makes it difficult to arrive at definitive conclusions concerning the lives and backgrounds of Abū Aḥmad and his father Firisnāfa, let alone their possible connections to the Hephthalites. But if there is any truth to the assumption that Abū Aḥmad was of Hephthalite background, it may be in this respect—and not the one asserted by Imām al-Dīn—that the Chishtī saint bears an affinity to the Abdālī.

3.3: Ḥasan Abdāl

Another local saint whose name resembles the tribal name “Abdālī” is Ḥasan Abdāl. While information about Ḥasan Abdāl is relatively scarce, an important source is the *Tārīkh-i Maʿšūmī* composed by Muḥammad Maʿšūm Bakkārī (d. 1019/1611), who was related lineally to the saint. In Muḥammad Maʿšūm's chronicle we read that Ḥasan Abdāl (fl. early 1400s) was born to a family of sayyids residing in Sabzawār. After spending some years in the Hijaz,

³⁵ Kazuo Morimoto has discussed how *sayyid/sharīf* pedigree is in certain cases a social construct that is applied to “strangers” or “alien individuals” who are perceived to either pose a threat or be a blessing to a given community but who, on account of their “stranger-ness,” are considered to be divine and/or objects of reverence; see Kazuo Morimoto, “Towards the Formation of Sayyido-Sharifology: Questioning Accepted Fact,” *Journal of Sophia Asian Studies* 22 (2004): 95–96. In the case of Abū Aḥmad, later hagiographers may well have accorded him a *sayyid/sharīf* pedigree to explain his “strange” and “extraordinary” family background.

Ḥasan returned to his hometown in the reign of the Timurid ruler, Shāhrukh Mīrzā, who is said to have regarded the holy man with esteem. On his way back from a journey to India with Shāhrukh Mīrzā, Ḥasan took up residence in Qandahar with a group of his disciples and spent the rest of his life in the province, where he is said to have performed various miraculous feats. His shrine, which is located on a hilltop along the banks of the Arghandāb River, became a popular site of visitation (*ziyārat*).³⁶ In the time of Bābur, the shrine town was called Bābā Ḥasan Abdāl and, at present, is known as Bābā Walī (lit., Saintly Father).³⁷

The theory linking the Abdālī to Abū Aḥmad Abdāl is commonly repeated in the scholarly literature despite its historical problems, including the lack of evidence of an early Abdālī presence in Herat and the evident political motivations underlying Imām al-Dīn Chishtī's assertion. But to my knowledge, there has been no connection drawn between the Abdālī Afghans and Ḥasan Abdāl even though it is arguably the more plausible. For one, Ḥasan Abdāl is revered locally as the patron saint of Qandahar and, as detailed in subsequent chapters of this thesis, the sources consistently link the Abdālī primarily to the Qandahar region in the pre-Durrānī period. What is more striking is that the earliest attested references to the Abdālī are found in Mughal and Safavid chronicles composed in the

³⁶ Muḥammad Ma'sūm Bakkārī, *Tārīkh-i Sind: Al-ma'rūf bi Tārīkh-i Ma'sūmī*, ed. 'Umar Dā'udpūta (Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1938), 130–35.

³⁷ The town of Ḥasan Abdāl, east of the Attock River in the Punjab, apparently takes its name from this saint as well; see *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., s.v. "Ḥasan Abdāl" (by J. Burton-Page). But the Ḥasan Abdāl of the Punjab should not be confused with Bābā Walī, also known as Bābā Ḥasan Abdāl, a shrine town in Qandahar. According to a relatively recent tradition, Bābā Walī/Ḥasan Abdāl and Ḥasan Abdāl are named after two different figures; see Alexander Cunningham, *Archaeological Survey of India: Four Reports Made during the Years 1862–63–64–65*, vol. 2. (Simla, 1871), 135–39. But the shrine town in Qandahar certainly takes its name from Ḥasan Abdāl as well. For more on the site of Bābā Walī/Ḥasan Abdāl in Qandahar, see Zāhir al-Dīn Muḥammad Bābur, *The Baburnama: Memoirs of Babur, Prince and Emperor*, trans. Wheeler M. Thackston (New York: Modern Library, 2002), 251, 254; Elphinstone, *An Account of the Kingdom of Caubul*, 73; Adamec, *Historical and Political Gazetteer of Afghanistan*, 5:67–68; and Muḥammad Ibrāhīm Khalīl, "Bābā Ḥasan Abdāl mashhūr Bābā Walī," *Āryānā* 7, no. 8 (1327 H.sh./1948): 20–23.

sixteenth century, or shortly after the passing of Ḥasan Abdāl. If the Abdālī did acquire their tribal designation through an association with a saintly figure, it seems more likely it was derived from Ḥasan Abdāl and/or his disciples. However, as with the theory linking the Abdālī to Abū Aḥmad Abdāl, their connection to Ḥasan Abdāl does not appear to be supported by any documentary evidence or by oral traditions about the Abdālī. Thus, the link between the Abdālī and Ḥasan Abdāl remains tenuous.

3.4: The Place of the Abdālī in the Afghan Tribal System

As noted earlier, historians like Ḥabībī and Nayyir asserted that the name Abdālī is a form of one of the names used for the Hephthalites in the polyglot sources and that Hephthalite history should be regarded as part of the heritage of the Abdālī.³⁸ Not surprisingly, this argument has met with skepticism, especially from the authors Wakīlī Pōpalzaʿī and Kamal Khan who view the Hephthalite hypothesis as untenable since it undermines the legendary accounts found in various genealogical histories that depict the Abdālī as one of various “Afghan” tribes purportedly of Israelite descent.

A prominent example is Niʿmat Allāh’s *Tārīkh-i Khān Jahānī*, a work composed in India in the seventeenth century that contains one of the earliest references to the Abdālī as one among a multitude of tribes descending from Qays, the putative ancestor of the Afghans. The *Tārīkh-i Khān Jahānī* describes Qays as a descendent of Afghana, the grandson of the Israelite king Saul, who served as military commander for King Solomon and from whom Afghans take their name.³⁹ In the aftermath of the Babylonian exile, Afghana’s descendants—referred to as Banī Isrāʾīl or “Children of Israel”—settled in the mountains of

³⁸ Ḥabībī, “Da Abdāliyānū Mashāhīr,” 200–1; Ḥabībī, *Tārīkh-i Afghānistān baʿd az Islām*, 29, 594; Nayyir, “Abdālī, Sadōzāyy, Durrānī,” 76.

³⁹ Niʿmat Allāh, *Tārīkh-i Khān Jahānī*, 1:68–75.

Ghūr.⁴⁰ Among these Israelite Afghans was a figure named Qays, represented both as a kinsman of Khālīd b. Walīd and a contemporary of the Prophet Muḥammad. In Ni‘mat Allāh’s account of events, Khālīd b. Walīd summoned Qays from Ghūr to Madina where Qays adopted Islam and where the Prophet renamed him ‘Abd al-Rashīd. As a companion of the Prophet, ‘Abd al-Rashīd returned to Ghūr and introduced the religion of Islam there. He is also said to have fathered three sons—Sarban, Batan, and Gharghusht—the progeny of whom, the Afghans, gradually spread south- and southeast-wards from Ghūr into Rōh and the Sulaymān Range and thence onto the plains of northern India.⁴¹

In the passage dedicated to the Abdālī *nasab*, the *Tārīkh-i Khān Jahānī* describes the confederacy’s putative eponymous founder, Abdāl, as a descendent of ‘Abd al-Rashīd’s eldest son Sarban in the following sequence: ‘Abd al-Rashīd → Sarban → Sharkhbūn → Tarīn → Awdāl. The work’s brief account of the Abdālī *nasab* reads: “Three children were born to Tarīn: one was black in complexion, and he was named Tūr (meaning “black” in Pashto); the other was white in complexion, and he was named Spīn (meaning “white” in Pashto); his third son was named Awdāl.”⁴² The *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* likewise begins its account with Abdāl, Tūr, and Spīn as the three sons of Tarīn, which indicates that its author(s) envisioned

⁴⁰ The tradition of the Israelite descent of the Afghans was recorded in the *Ā’in-i Akbarī* of Abū al-Faḏl, which demonstrates that it was current among the Afghans since at least the sixteenth century, and perhaps much earlier; see Abū al-Faḏl, *Ā’in-i Akbarī*, ed. Blochmann, 1/2:591; Abū al-Faḏl ‘Allāmī, *The Āin-i-Akbarī by Abul-Fazl-i-‘Allāmī*, trans. Henry Blochmann and H. S. Jarrett, 3 vols. (Calcutta: Baptist Mission, 1873–1907), 2:406–7.

⁴¹ Ni‘mat Allāh, *Tārīkh-i Khān Jahānī*, 1:107–14. For the work’s description of the migration of the Afghans to Rōh and the Sulaymān Mountains, see 1:119–20. Karrān/Karlān, the ancestor of the Karrānī/Karlānī branch of Afghans, is described alternatively as a fourth son of Qays and as belonging to the lineage of either Sarban b. Qays or Gharghushtī b. Qays. For the precarious position of the Karrānī/Karlānī in the Afghan genealogical histories, see Caroe, *The Pathans*, 11–12, 20–24. For an account of the origins of the Karrānī, see Ni‘mat Allāh, *Tārīkh-i Khān Jahānī*, 2:638–39.

⁴² See Ni‘mat Allāh, *Tārīkh-i Khān Jahānī*, 2:556. On p. 562, we learn that Awdāl’s only son Rajar (also known as ‘Īsā) fathered four sons: Pōpal, Bārak, Akō [Alakō?], and ‘Alī.

the work as a continuation and elaboration of the *Tārīkh-i Khān Jahānī*'s short account of the Abdālī.⁴³

The *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ʿālī-shān*'s account of the origins and early history of the Abdālī Afghans differs from that of the *Tārīkh-i Khān Jahānī* in some respects. For instance, it describes Afghana's descendants as settling in Kasēghar, or the Sulaymān Mountains, rather than in Ghūr, and then spreading from there;⁴⁴ Qays is the name not of ʿAbd al-Rashīd but of the latter's father; and there is a lengthy generational gap between Sharkbūn and Abdāl. Yet there are several instances of overlap between the two works. For instance, the Abdālī *nasab* given in the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ʿālī-shān* closely resembles that given in the *Tārīkh-i Khān Jahānī*: ʿAbd al-Rashīd → Sarban → Sharkbūn → [lengthy generational gap →] Abdāl.⁴⁵ The *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ʿālī-shān* also contains the narreme of the Israelite descent of the Afghans-Pashtuns. According to this narreme, King Solomon travelled on his magical throne (*takht*) to Kasēghar and Rūda (Rōh) and, finding the highest peak of these mountains pleasant, sat upon it. This peak became known as Takht-i Sulaymān, or Solomon's Throne. Before returning to his kingdom, Solomon granted control over Kasēghar and its surrounding lands to his military commander Malik Afghan, also a descendant of King Saul, who cleansed Kasēghar of unbelievers and introduced [proto-]Islam there. Malik Afghan eventually returned to Jerusalem to serve King Solomon and died there, but he left behind a son whose descendants exercised rule over Kasēghar and its surrounding lands until the coming of

⁴³ See *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī*, fols. 2b–5a. As noted earlier, the genealogical particulars found in the SAA at times conflict with the data supplied by both the *TKhJ* and the *TMA*.

⁴⁴ Kamal Khan consistently refers to Ghūr as the homeland of the Afghans—an assertion that he clearly derives from the *TKhJ*; see Kamal Khan, *Rise of Saddozais*, 25–28, 30–38. Though Kamal Khan often cites the *TMA* as one of his sources for this assertion, the latter work clearly locates the early Afghans in Kasēghar and contains no reference to Ghūr as an Afghan homeland.

⁴⁵ For a description of the differing opinions concerning Abdāl's *nasab*, see ʿAlī Muḥammad Khān, *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ʿālī-shān*, fols. 8a–8b.

Islam. The ensuing account of ‘Abd al-Rashīd’s acceptance of Islam bears close resemblance to the *Tārīkh-i Khān Jahānī*’s account of this event and need not be repeated here.⁴⁶ The subsequent section of the work comprises a unique account of how leadership over all the Afghans devolved upon ‘Abd al-Rashīd’s descendent Abdāl, who belonged to the senior Sarban branch. We are also told that at an unspecified point in the fifteenth century, one of Abdāl’s progeny, Zīrak, received permission from the fifteenth-century Timurid ruler, Shāhrukh Mīrzā, to migrate from Kasēghar and resettle in Qandahar.⁴⁷

Kamal Khan and Wakīlī Pōpalza’ī relied primarily on information derived from one or more of the above genealogical histories in arguing against the Hephthalite hypothesis postulated by Ḥabībī, Nayyir, and others. In his *Rise of Saddozais*, Kamal Khan endorsed the Israelite origin of the Afghans as outlined in the *Tārīkh-i Khān Jahānī* and *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān* and added that the Abdālī, who are of “pure Afghan stock,” ought not be confused with the Hephthalites.⁴⁸ Though not well-acquainted with the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān*, Wakīlī Pōpalza’ī relied on data drawn from a combination of other works—including *Tārīkh-i Khān Jahānī*, *Ḥusayn Shāhī*, and works derived from the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī*—to contest the Abdālī-Hephthalite connection.⁴⁹ In an article written in response to Nayyir, Wakīlī Pōpalza’ī critiqued his view that the name Abdāl was related to one of the names used for the Hephthalites.⁵⁰ Closely following the *Ḥusayn Shāhī*’s brief narrative of Abdālī history,

⁴⁶ ‘Alī Muḥammad Khān, *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān*, fols. 4b–6b.

⁴⁷ ‘Alī Muḥammad Khān, *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān*, fols. 7a–10b.

⁴⁸ See Kamal Khan, *Rise of Saddozais*, 20–29. On pp. 31–32, Kamal Khan also writes that the Hephthalite hypothesis arose “due to political reasons connected with the sympathizers of Nazis in Afghanistan.” As noted earlier, however, this idea can be traced back to the writings of British colonial authors active in the early nineteenth century.

⁴⁹ Wakīlī Pōpalza’ī, *Tīmūr Shāh Durrānī*, 1:21.

⁵⁰ See ‘Azīz al-Dīn Wakīlī Pōpalza’ī, “Intiqād bar maqāla-i ‘Abdālī, Sadōzā’ī wa Durrānī’ wa difā‘ az ān,” *Āryānā* 23, nos. 3–4 (1344 H.sh./1965): 221–30.

Wakīlī Pōpalzaʿī argued that the tribal name derives from the Arabic technical term *abdāl* reserved for a select group of *awliyāʿ* chosen by God whose existence was necessary for the maintenance of the cosmos. He added that the actual name of Abdāl, the putative ancestor of the Abdālī, was Muḥammad ʿĀrif Sarbanī—presumably a reference to the Shaykh ʿĀrif Tarīn Awdāl described in Niʿmat Allāh’s *Tārīkh-i Khān Jahānī* as a saint belonging to the Sarbanī branch of Afghans. Thus weaving together information derived from the Ḥusayn Shāhī and the *Tārīkh-i Khān Jahānī*, Wakīlī Pōpalzaʿī argued that the Chishtī saint Khwāja Abū Aḥmad bestowed on ʿĀrif Sarbanī the lofty title of Abdāl and thereafter the latter’s descendants were known as Abdālī. By asserting that ʿĀrif Sarbanī acquired the name Abdāl no earlier than the tenth century, Wakīlī Pōpalzaʿī argued that the Abdālī-Hephthalite relationship is untenable on both historical and linguistic grounds.⁵¹

The critiques levied by Wakīlī Pōpalzaʿī and Kamal Khan hinge largely on information drawn from genealogical histories like the *Tārīkh-i Khān Jahānī*, *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī*, and *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ʿālī-shān*. While these works offer native accounts that are crucial to understanding how the history of the Afghans in general and Abdālī in particular came to be represented, these scholars fail to consider the limitations they present as sources for Abdālī history. An important limitation these genealogical histories pose is that they tend to depict the disparate Afghan tribes as fitting neatly within a well-defined and more-or-less concrete tribal structure. This has led to the misconception that the Afghans represent a sort of ethnic unity. But while the Afghans appear to have shared certain cultural and linguistic traits, many scholars have noted that Afghan identity has historically

⁵¹ See Wakīlī Pōpalzaʿī, “Intiqād bar maqāla-i ‘Abdālī, Sadōzāʿī wa Durrānī,” 225–26; Wakīlī Pōpalzaʿī, *Tīmūr Shāh Durrānī*, 1:21, 1:303–4. As it turns out, the Shaykh ʿĀrif described by Niʿmat Allāh was active in the sixteenth century, not in the tenth century; see the discussion of Shaykh ʿĀrif Tarīn Awdāl in Chapter 4.

been a fluid category in which many diverse ethnic groups have partaken.⁵² While members could be born into such formations, others may have been adopted, and still others may have joined for various reasons—be they political, economic, and/or other.⁵³ The brief overview of the historical evolution and application of the name “Afghan” below aims to provide a clearer sense of the term’s fluidity as an ethnic category.

The origins and early history of the Afghan peoples are obscure, though they are mentioned intermittently in sources dating as far back as early as the sixth century as inhabiting the vicinity of the Kōh-i Sulaymān, one of the prominent mountain ranges—including the Tōba, Kākar, Safīd Kōh and others—on the northwestern frontier of the Indian subcontinent that straddle what is today the Afghanistan-Pakistan border.⁵⁴ Islamic-era sources written in Arabic and Persian roughly from the tenth to fifteenth centuries mention the Afghans sporadically but consistently locate them in the Kōh-i Sulaymān region. Among the earliest of these sources is the *Ḥudūd al-‘ālam*, completed in ca. 372/982, which notes Afghans lived in a village atop a mountain named “Saul,” which Arlinghaus suggests likely refers to the locale of Shawal in the Tochi Valley, which is in the northern limits of the

⁵² For more on this ethnic heterogeneity of the Afghans, see Herbert Franz Schurmann, *The Mongols of Afghanistan: An Ethnography of the Moghols and Related Peoples of Afghanistan* (The Hague: Mouton, 1962), 39–49; Arlinghaus, “The Transformation of Afghan Tribal Society,” 66–69; Gommans, *The Rise of the Indo-Afghan Empire*, 167–71; Vogelsang, “The Ethnogenesis of the Pashtuns,” 228–29, 231–33. As alluded to by Gommans, a close analog to the Afghans in the sense of having an equally complex ethnic identity are the Turkic peoples; see Peter B. Golden, *An Introduction to the History of the Turkic Peoples: Ethnogenesis and State Formation in Medieval and Early Modern Eurasia and the Middle East* (Wiesbaden: O. Harrassowitz, 1992), 1–14.

⁵³ For the fluidity that characterized nomadic tribal structures in pre-modern times, see Rudi Paul Lindner, “What Was a Nomadic Tribe?” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 24, no. 4 (1982): 689–711.

⁵⁴ In general terms, the Kōh-i Sulaymān corresponds to the vast mountainous range that runs southwest to northeast and that is bordered on the northwest by provinces of Qandahar and Ghazni and on the southeast by the Indus River. For more details, see Raverty, *Notes on Afghanistan and Baluchistan*, 464–67, 577–78.

Sulaymān Range.⁵⁵ In his famous study of India, al-Bīrūnī (d. 440/1048) notes that a variety of Afghan tribes dwelled in the western mountains (*fi al-jibāl al-gharbiyya*) of India up to the lands of Sind, which corresponds to the Sulaymān Mountain.⁵⁶ Sayf al-Harawī (b. 681/1282), who completed his history of the Kartid dynasty of Herat in ca. 721/1321–22, described several exchanges between Kartid forces and Afghan fighters in and around the town of Mastung (in what is today Baluchistan) to the west of the Sulaymān Mountains, a region that the author frequently describes as “Afghanistan.”⁵⁷ Ibn Baṭṭuṭa, who apparently passed through Ghazna in 734/1334, noted that the Afghans lived in the mountains of that region, though he also explicitly referred to Kōh-i Sulaymān as “their mountain” (*jabaluhum*).⁵⁸ In his *Ẓafar-nāma*, Sharaf al-Dīn ‘Alī Yazdī (d. 858/1454) describes several altercations in India involving the Timurid forces and Afghans who descended “from the Sulaymān Mountains” (*az Kōh-i Sulaymān*).⁵⁹ In the *Bābur-nāma*, the Mughal dynasty’s founder Bābur (d. 937/1530) describes “Afghanistan” as the mountainous territory located between Kabul and districts like Kōhāt, Hangū, Bannū, and Dūkī that lay west of the Indus.⁶⁰ While Bābur does not mention the Kōh-i

⁵⁵ See *Ḥudūd al-‘Ālam*, ‘The Regions of the World’: A Persian Geography, 372 A.H.–982 A.D., ed. and trans. Vladimir Minorsky, 2nd ed., ed. C. E. Bosworth (London: Luzac, 1970), 91; Arlinghaus, “The Transformation of Afghan Tribal Society,” 133.

⁵⁶ The Arabic passage reads: *fi al-jibāl al-gharbiyya minhā aṣnāf al-firaq al-Afghāniyya ilā an tanqaṭi‘ bi-al-qurb min arḍ al-Sind*; see Abū Muḥammad bin Aḥmad al-Bīrūnī, *Kitāb al-Bīrūnī fi taḥqīq mā li al-Hind* (Ḥaydarābād: Maṭba‘at Majlis Dā‘irat al-Ma‘ārif al-‘Uthmāniyya, 1377/1958), 167.

⁵⁷ For the Kartid-Afghan altercations in Mastung, see Sayf b. Muḥammad b. Ya‘qūb al-Harawī, *Tārīkh-nāma-i Harāt*, ed. Muḥammad Zubayr al-Ṣiddīqī (Calcutta: Baptist Mission Press, 1362/1943), 199–201, 205–6, 209, 263–64, 267–70. The *Tārīkh-nāma-i Harāt* is among the earliest sources to employ the term “Afghanistan.”

⁵⁸ The Arabic text is available in Ibn Baṭṭuṭa, *Voyages d’Ibn Batoutah: Texte arabe, accompagné d’une traduction*, trans. C. Defrémery and B. R. Sanguinetti, 4 vols. (Paris, 1853–59), 3:89–90.

⁵⁹ Sharaf al-Dīn ‘Alī Yazdī, *Ẓafar-nāma: Tārīkh-i ‘umūmī mufaṣṣil-i Īrān dar dawra-i Tīmūriyyān*, ed. Muḥammad ‘Abbāsī, 2 vols. (Tehran: Amīr Kabīr, 1336 H.sh./1957), 1:272, 2:19.

⁶⁰ Bābur, *The Baburnama*, trans. Thackston, 152, 156, 164, 167, 173, 273; also see Gankovsky, *The Peoples of Pakistan*, 127n106; Gommans, *The Rise of the Indo-Afghan Empire*, 11–12.

Sulaymān by name, the highlands he calls “Afghanistan” corresponds roughly to the Sulaymān Range. Bābur’s characterization of this region as Afghanistan, literally, “the lands of the Afghans,” is not surprising since, as the foregoing analysis shows, Kōh-i Sulaymān represents the earliest known Afghan homeland and it seems to have remained a predominantly Afghan territory well into the sixteenth century.⁶¹

In histories written shortly after the Lōdī and Sūrī dynasties were toppled, the term Afghan engenders a broader meaning and is no longer confined primarily to the Kōh-i Sulaymān region. This subtle development is likely related to the successive waves of migration of various tribal groups from the Hindu Kush—including Ghūrīs, Khalaj, Turks, Afghans, and others—onto the plains of northern India. By the time the Mughals replaced the Lōdī and Sūrī dynasties, the term “Afghan” appears to have encompassed many of these recent migrants. On account of the general lack of sources detailing the history of the Afghans in pre-Mughal times, the complex process by which these disparate tribes came to be identified as Afghan remains poorly understood. But that such a process took place is at least hinted at in Mughal-era genealogical histories like the *Tārīkh-i Khān Jahānī*.

A telling example is the interrelationship between the Afghans and Ghūrī tribesmen who migrated from their mountainous homeland of Ghūr in what is today central Afghanistan. According to the *Tārīkh-i Khān Jahānī*, during the Umayyad caliphate (41–132/651–750), the famed military commander Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf al-Thaqafī (d. 95/714) dispatched an army against Ghūr. Fearing the impending attack, Shāh Ḥusayn—described as a local leader related to what later became the ruling Shansabānī family of the Ghurid dynasty (ca. 545–612/1150–1215), which established rule over large swathes of Khurasan and northern India—fled Ghūr and entered the service of the Afghan saint Shaykh Bayt (also

⁶¹ For other primary sources that locate the Afghans in the Sulaymān Mountains region, see especially: *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., s.v. “Afghān” (by G. Morgenstierne).

known as Batan/Bitan) b. Qays, whose tribe (*qabīla*) dwelled nearby.⁶² Shāh Ḥusayn became something of an adopted son to Shaykh Bayt. In time, he fell in love with the latter's daughter, Bībī Matō, and fathered a child with her out of wedlock. On account of Shāh Ḥusayn's illicit relations with Matō, Shaykh Bayt named the son Ghal-zōy (Pashto: 'son of the thief').⁶³ A similar version of this tradition is found in the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i 'ālī-shān* which relates that Mast 'Alī Ghūrī, said in the *Tārīkh-i Khān Jahānī* to be Shāh Ḥusayn's pseudonym, fathered a child named Ghalza'ī (again, out of wedlock) with a daughter of Tabrī b. 'Abd al-Rashīd.⁶⁴

While the accounts of Shāh Ḥusayn Ghūrī and Bībī Matō are likely apocryphal, they do point to some form of Ghūrī contribution to the ethnogenesis of the Afghans. This view is supported by the fact that, whereas pre-Mughal sources agree that the Kōh-i Sulaymān is the earliest known Afghan homeland, Mughal-era authors begin to depict Ghūr as an alternate Afghan homeland for the first time. If some form of Ghūrī-Afghan intermingling took place, as the apocryphal accounts imply, it would go a long way to explain why authors writing in Mughal India began to conflate the Ghūrī and Afghan traditions of homeland.⁶⁵

⁶² For the details of Shāh Ḥusayn's questionable familial ties to the ruling family of the Ghurid dynasty, see Ni'mat Allāh, *Tārīkh-i Khān Jahānī*, 2:594–95.

⁶³ Ni'mat Allāh, *Tārīkh-i Khān Jahānī*, 2:594–604.

⁶⁴ 'Alī Muḥammad Khān, *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i 'ālī-shān*, fol. 7b. 'Alī Muḥammad Khān may have derived this from Abū al-Faẓl who recounts a similar version of the tradition in the *Ā'in-i Akbarī*, the main difference being that Abū al-Faẓl ascribes the name Matī, a variant of Matō, to Mast 'Alī Ghūrī rather than the daughter of Batan; see Abū al-Faẓl, *Ā'in-i Akbarī*, ed. Blochmann, 1/2:591; Abū al-Faẓl, *The Ā'in-i Akbarī*, trans. Blochmann and Jarrett, 2:407. Concerning Mast 'Alī Ghūrī, Ni'mat Allāh writes "the most correct tradition is that his name was Sayyid Sarmast 'Alī" (*bi-qawl-i aṣḥaḥ nām-ash Sayyid Sarmast 'Alī būd*); see Ni'mat Allāh, *Tārīkh-i Khān Jahānī*, 2:612, 2:900–1. Note that whereas Ni'mat Allāh gives Qays's son the name Bayt or Batan/Bitan in the *TKHJ*, 'Alī Muḥammad Khān Khudaka gives this son the name Tabrī in the *TMA*.

⁶⁵ According to Raverty, various authors, including Firishta, have mistakenly interpreted the Pashto word "ghar" in the name Kasēghar to refer to Ghūr in central Afghanistan. He also suggests that on the basis of this misunderstanding practically all English writers—including Dow and Briggs, the translators of Firishta's

It is noteworthy that the Ghilzay also play a central role in this account as the progeny of the love child of Shāh Ḥusayn Ghūrī and Bībī Matō. Scholars have long speculated that the Ghilzay Afghans are the descendants of the Khalaj Turks, but the process by which the Khalaj evolved into Ghilzay Afghans is not clear.⁶⁶ As mentioned earlier, the

history, and their followers—have come to conflate the Afghans and the Ghurids; see Raverty, *Notes on Afghanistan and Baluchistan*, 466. While Raverty appears justified in drawing a clear distinction between the Ghūrīs and Afghans, his assessment that Firishta confounded Ghar and Ghūr is unfounded since Firishta does differentiate between Ghūr and Kōh-i Sulaymān (Kasēghar) in his work. More specifically, Firishta notes that an Arab official in the service of the Umayyads, Khālīd b. ‘Abd Allāh, settled in the Sulaymān Range and married his daughter to a local Afghan notable who had become a Muslim. That daughter went on to bear children, the most famous of her offspring being Lōdī and Sūr, the eponyms of the Afghan Lōdī and Sūr tribes; see Muḥammad Qāsim Hindū-Shāh Astarābādī Firishta, *Tārīkh-i Firishta*, ed. Muḥammad Rizā Naṣīrī, 2 vols. (Tehran: Anjuman-i Āṣār wa Mafākhir-i Farhangī, 1387 H.sh./2009), 1:55. In a later passage of the work, Firishta describes Sultān Maḥmūd of Ghazna’s expedition against Ghūr and its ruler, Muḥammad bin Sūrī—the ancestor of the founders of the Ghurid dynasty and evidently unrelated to the Afghan Sūr—in 401/1011–12; see Firishta, *Tārīkh-i Firishta*, ed. Naṣīrī, 1:90–91. There is also little indication that Dow or Briggs confused Ghar with Ghūr either; they simply (and mistakenly) viewed the Ghurid dynasts descended from the aforesaid Sūrī as belonging to the Afghan Sūr tribe; see John Briggs, trans., *History of the Rise of the Mahomedan Power in India till the Year A.D. 1612: Translated from the Original Persian of Mahomed Kasim Ferishta*, 4 vols. (London, 1829), 1:49. Unlike Dow’s original translation published in 1768, the 1803 edition of his translation includes the statement that Muḥammad bin Sūrī belonged to the “Soor Tribe of Afghans.” See Alexander Dow, trans., *The History of Hindostan; From the Earliest Account of Time to the Death of Akbar; Translated from the Persian of Mahummud Casim Ferishta of Delhi: Together with a Dissertation concerning the Religion and Philosophy of the Brahmins; With an Appendix Containing the History of the Mogul Empire, from its Decline in the Reign of Mahummud Shaw, to the Present Times*, 2 vols. (London, 1768), 1:65–66; Alexander Dow, trans., *The History of Hindostan: Translated from the Persian*, new ed., 3 vols. (London, 1803), 1:54. It will be recalled that the TKHJ alleges that the Afghans were located in the Ghūr region since pre-Islamic times and later settled in Kōh-i Sulaymān. This suggests that by the Mughal period, there was a popular, if mistaken belief that the Afghans were natives of Ghūr.

⁶⁶ For the Khalaj as the ancestors of the Ghilzay Afghans, see Minorsky, “The Turkish Dialect of the Khalaj,” 426–34; Ḥudūd al-‘Ālam, ‘*The Regions of the World*’, 347–48; C. E. Bosworth, *The Ghaznavids: Their Empire in Afghanistan and Eastern Iran 994–1040* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1963), 35–36; Caroe, *The Pathans*, 17–19, 88–89, 130–32; *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., s.v. “Khaladj” (by W. Barthold); *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., s.v. “Ghalzay” (by R. N. Frye); *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., s.v. “Khaladj” (by C. E. Bosworth and G. Doerfer); Barthold, *An Historical Geography of Iran*, 72, 79–80; Arlinghaus, “The Transformation of Afghan Tribal Society,” 65–67; Dani, Litvinski, and Safi, “Eastern Kushans, Kidarites in Gandhara and Kashmir, and Later Hephthalites,” 179–82; André Wink, *Al-Hind, the Making of the Indo-Islamic World*, vol. 2, *The Slave Kings and the Islamic Conquest, 11th–13th Centuries* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 70, 116; Peter Jackson, *The Delhi Sultanate: A Political and Military History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 11; Willem Vogelsang, *The Afghans* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002), 186–87.

Khalaj Turks were active in what is today southern Afghanistan since at least the tenth century and are sometimes mentioned alongside the Afghans in the armies of local polities, including that of the Ghaznavids (366–582/977–1186). The Khalaj migrated to India in the Ghurid period and leaders of the tribe later established the Khaljī dynasty (689–720/1290–1320), an Indo-Muslim polity that formed part of the Delhi Sultanate.⁶⁷ The description of the Ghilzay in these genealogical histories as a product of the union between the non-Afghan Shāh Ḥusayn Ghūrī and the Afghan Bībī Matō lends credence to the theory that the Khalaj were in part assimilated into the Afghan tribal framework.

The accounts of the Ghūrīs and the Ghilzay are not anomalous but representative of a much broader trend whereby various ethnic communities became subsumed under the umbrella of an Afghan identity. There are plenty of other examples scattered throughout the Afghan genealogical histories that point to the fluidity of the Afghan ethnic category. While the manner in which disparate tribes congealed to form a broader Afghan identity is not specified in the sources, it may be best understood in relation to the political milieu of early Mughal India, which played a formative role in the history and ethnogenesis of the Afghans as understood in early modern times.⁶⁸ For it was in this period that the imperial forces of the Mughals and Safavids vied for control over Indo-Khurasan, or the frontier between their respective empires, leading to an ever-greater degree of state interaction with local Afghan tribes. The growing political influence of the Mughal and Safavid states in Indo-Khurasan and the real and/or perceived threats they posed appears to have fostered a deeper sense of solidarity among the tribes of the frontier region and led to their increasing

⁶⁷ For the establishment of the Khaljī dynasty in India, see Jackson, *The Delhi Sultanate*, 82–85.

⁶⁸ Green, “Tribe, Diaspora, and Sainthood in Afghan History,” 172–73, 183–84; Vogelsang, “The Ethnogenesis of the Pashtuns,” 228–35; Hanifi, *Connecting Histories in Afghanistan*, 25–26.

self-awareness and concern with self-definition.⁶⁹ It is in this context that the first elaborate genealogical histories, or genealogical histories, of the Afghan tribes began to appear.

A significant challenge faced by the authors of these genealogical histories was making sense of the diverse array of traditions, often oral in nature, concerning the past of the diffuse tribes. As Nile Green indicates, the genius of Ni‘mat Allāh’s work is that it “connected, codified, and perfected these traditions in writing.” Further, Green suggests that the *Tārīkh-i Khān Jahānī* projected the specific temporality of its present onto both the past and future of Afghan history. In other words, whatever complex web of ethnic elements the Afghans represented in the past, these disparate pasts were reimagined and reformulated into a single, coherent whole.⁷⁰ In this sense, the textualisation of Afghan history by the *Tārīkh-i Khān Jahānī* helped crystalize what had until then been a fluid ethnic category termed “Afghan.” A cohering narrative element of the work designed to foster unity between the disparate tribesmen is the myth of common descent from the ancient Israelites. This popular myth presented the Afghans as monotheists who possessed a revealed Abrahamic faith prior to the advent of Islam, and ‘Abd al-Rashīd, the putative ancestor of all Afghans, as both a Companion of the Prophet Muḥammad and the first Muslim Afghan.⁷¹ In cultivating a sense of ancient solidarity between the tribes in this way, the myth of Israelite descent conveniently papered over the reality that the Afghans were a diverse people whose Islamisation was a gradual and uneven process.

⁶⁹ For an introduction to the role of “external” and/or “state” pressures on the formation and consolidation of tribal identities, particularly on political frontiers, see Richard Tapper, “Introduction,” 1–82; Lindner, “What Was a Nomadic Tribe?” 698–700.

⁷⁰ Green, “Tribe, Diaspora, and Sainthood in Afghan History,” 183–84.

⁷¹ The religious implications underlying the myth of Israelite descent are discussed in: Caroe, *The Pathans*, 10; Anderson, “Khan and Khel,” 129; Arlinghaus, “The Transformation of Afghan Tribal Society,” 109–11; Gommans, *The Rise of the Indo-Afghan Empire*, 167.

Another important point made by Green is the immense influence of Ni‘mat Allāh’s work on the future of Afghan history. As the common ancestor of several later texts about Afghan history, the *Tārīkh-i Khān Jahānī* exerted a noticeable influence on the understanding of Afghan history up until contemporary times. As already noted, later works like *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* and *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān* appear to be based at least in part on the *Tārīkh-i Khān Jahānī*. Several colonial and European authors relied on these works for information on Afghans while local authors like Kamal Khan and Wakīlī Pōpalza‘ī consider them authoritative sources on Afghan history. Nevertheless, as argued in the preceding analysis, these genealogical histories are complex texts that need to be read in their proper context and understood as representing a particular view of Afghan history as understood from the Mughal period onward. One of the misconceptions that these authors fail to address is that the genealogical histories present the Afghan tribes as an ethnic unity, even though a closer examination reveals plenty of examples of the tribal structure being relatively absorbent and comprised of multiple ethnic elements.

If we accept the fluidity of the Afghan tribal system, then it is entirely possible that the Hephthalites contributed to the ethnic makeup of the Afghans at some point in the past, as Ḥabībī, Nayyir and others have speculated. That the memory of an affinity to the Hephthalites is not preserved in the genealogical histories does not discount the contention that Hephthalite-related groups adopted an Afghan identity at some point in their history while retaining the possibly Hephthalite tribal name Abdāl. Of course, there are many pitfalls to the all too common method of drawing parallels between peoples solely on the basis of similarities in their names. But the case for the Abdālī-Hephthalite connection is strengthened when considering each confederacy’s association with tribal nomadism. In the case of the Abdālī, although the formation of the Durrānī state encouraged sedentarisation

among many of the Abdālī-Durrānī tribesmen, the available evidence suggests that the confederacy remained predominantly nomadic well into the eighteenth century. Moreover, various scholars have noted that the nomadic tribes regarded as “Afghan” represent a diversity of ethnic elements and that the lands traditionally inhabited by the Afghans have, since ancient times, been traversed and settled by various nomadic peoples, including the Hephthalites.⁷² Indeed, as noted earlier, several scholars have proposed a possible connection between the Hephthalites and the Khalaj, the putative ancestors of the Ghilzay Afghans, who retain a nomadic culture even to the present.⁷³ It is not out of the question that the Abdālī—who, like their Ghilzay neighbours and kinsmen, were historically a nomadic people that has for centuries dwelled in the lands south of the Hindu Kush that formed part of ancient Hephthalite kingdoms—are, in part, remnants of the Hephthalite confederacy, and that the tribal name Abdāl is one of the surviving relics of this shared past.

The above conjectures imply some form of Hephthalite assimilation into Afghan culture. Yet this hypothesis raises the important questions, namely, when and under what circumstances did the Hephthalites assume an Afghan ethnic identity? The ethno-genesis of the Abdālī Afghans may be linked to the settlement of Hephthalite groups in the Afghan environment in and around the Sulaymān Range—which may have been precipitated by any number of factors (e.g., internecine conflicts, local disputes, foreign invasions, etc.) that remain unclear—and their adoption of Pashto, an eastern-Iranian tongue that is often described as the “language of the Afghans.”

⁷² See Schurmann, *The Mongols of Afghanistan*, 44–46; Arlinghaus, “The Transformation of Afghan Tribal Society,” 66–69; Vogelsang, “The Ethnogenesis of the Pashtuns,” 228–35.

⁷³ See Anderson, “Doing Pakhtu,” *passim*. The role of the Ghilzay as nomadic tribal traders (*pawindas/kūchīs*) active in the commercial centres of Qandahar, Kabul and Peshawar in the early-modern period are discussed in Hanifi, *Connecting Histories in Afghanistan*, 38–44.

There is compelling evidence that the Khalaj underwent just such a process of acculturation. Specifically, Minorsky referred to the work of the thirteenth century geographer Muḥammad ibn Najīb Bakrān who writes that the Khalaj migrated to Zābulistān and settled in the steppes of Ghazni. The author also explicitly states that the extreme heat of the region had darkened their complexion and that their language also underwent transformation (*zabān-i ānhā nīz taghyīr kard*) in their new habitat.⁷⁴ Based on this statement, Richard N. Frye inferred that the originally Turkic speaking Khalaj who settled in the lands south of the Hindu Kush adopted a new language, perhaps an early form of Pashto spoken by the local Afghans of the time, and eventually came to be identified as Ghilzay Afghans.⁷⁵

Unlike the Khalaj, who later played a significant role in the post-Mongol history of Indo-Khurasan and India, relatively little is known about the Abdālī until the sixteenth century when the confederacy begins to appear in Safavid and Mughal sources and thus emerge from historical obscurity. It is possible that they, like the Khalaj, were linked to Hephthalite groups that settled in the lands south of the Hindu Kush and underwent a similar process of acculturation in their new environment, which may have included the adoption of Pashto (i.e., *Afghānī*), hence their later identification as Afghans. Indeed, the adoption of a new language is not unprecedented among the Abdālī; since the mid-eighteenth century many members of the Abdālī-Durrānī royal household and urbanized elite underwent a process of acculturation whereby they adopted Persian as their everyday language and could no longer speak the language of their ancestors.⁷⁶ As discussed later in this thesis, the Persianization of the Durrānī elite was precipitated by conditions specific to

⁷⁴ Muḥammad ibn Najīb Bakrān, *Jahān-nāma*, ed. Jawād Ṣafī-nizhād (Tehran: Ahl-i Qalam, 1381 H.sh./2002), 136; Minorsky, "The Turkish Dialect of the Khalaj," 432.

⁷⁵ *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., s.v. "Ghalzay" (by R. N. Frye). The theory of the Khalaj/Khaljīs as possible Pashto-speakers is also discussed in Bivar, "The History of Eastern Iran," 216–17.

⁷⁶ On this topic see Ahmadi, *Modern Persian Literature in Afghanistan*, 45–49.

the eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries. Nevertheless, the acculturation process undergone by the Abdālī-Durrānī in more recent times, and apparently by their Ghilzay neighbours several centuries earlier, indicates that the language of the local tribal groups was liable to change.

The theory that the Abdālī are related to Hephthalite groups who settled in an Afghan environment and assumed an Afghan identity linked to their adoption of Pashto is nearly impossible to verify. The main issue is that the history of the Pashto language is as uncertain as Abdālī history.⁷⁷ Despite certain claims made to the contrary, Pashto did not become a textual language until the sixteenth century. On account of the lack of documents in Pashto, very little information has survived about its earlier history, let alone its relation to individual Afghan tribal groups like the Abdālī.⁷⁸ The dearth of data concerning the history of Hephthalite related groups and their possible adoption of the Pashto language leaves any hypothetical Abdālī-Hephthalite connection tenuous at our present state of knowledge. Moreover, even assuming there is any truth to the hypothesis that the Abdālī in part represent Hephthalites who became “Afghanized” at some point in time, the fluidity of the Afghan tribal structure suggests the Abdālī confederacy is itself comprised of numerous other ethnic elements that over the centuries have been assimilated.

⁷⁷ Morgenstierne has proposed on linguistic grounds that present-day Pashto was originally a “Saka” or Scythian dialect; see Georg Morgenstierne, “The Place of Pashto among the Iranic Languages and the Problem of the Constitution of Pashtun Linguistic and Ethnic Unity,” *Pashto Quarterly* 1, no. 4 (1357 H.sh./1978): 43–55; *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., s.v. “Afghān” (by G. Morgenstierne). Morgenstierne’s hypothesis, which hinges on the theory of the ancient Aryan migrations into Iran and India, implies that Scythian tribes from Eurasia entered the Iranian plateau early in the first millennium BCE and introduced an ancestor of Pashto to the Sulaymān Range region. For an overview of the Scythians, including their activities in the area of present-day Afghanistan, see Vogelsang, *The Afghans*, 81–108.

⁷⁸ For a brief survey of the history of the Pashto language, see *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., s.v. “Afghān” (by G. Morgenstierne). For a more recent analysis of the Pashto language, including an excellent overview of its various known dialects, see Prods O. Skjærvø, “Pashto,” in *Compendium Linguarum Iranicarum*, ed. Rüdiger Schmitt (Wiesbaden: L. Reichert, 1989), 384–410.

3.5: Conclusions

There is a great deal of uncertainty surrounding the origins of the Abdālī. They are not explicitly referred to in any known sources composed prior to the sixteenth century. The earliest known references to the Abdālī confederacy are found in genealogical histories that describe them as an Afghan tribe ultimately of “Israelite” descent. While popular myths of this type help explain the ideology of common descent prevalent among the Afghans, they also obfuscate the diversity of the Afghan ethnic category and tell us little about the history of individual tribal groups like the Abdālī. Moreover, many of the early Abdālī leaders described in these genealogical histories are not attested in the historical record.

This obscurity surrounding the early history of the Abdālī has given rise to several theories as to their possible origins. Based on a source written in the late-nineteenth century, several authors have asserted that the tribal name Abdāl is derived from the tenth century Chishtī saint Khwāja Abū Aḥmad. According to this view, both Abū Aḥmad and Abdāl, the putative ancestor of the Abdālī confederacy, take their names from the Arabic term *abdāl* on account of their status as Muslim saints. A slightly more recent hypothesis that was first posited in the colonial period and that gained traction in Afghanistan in the twentieth century is that Abdāl, the tribal name of the Abdālī, is related to the Hephthalites (Hayāṭila). This chapter offers two minor contributions to the debates on the origins of the Abdālī. Firstly, I propose that the Hephthalite connection to the Abdālī may apply also to Abū Aḥmad, who was active at a time when Khurasan had yet to be Islamized and when the presence of the Hephthalites may still have been felt in the region; in other words, the Hephthalite connection may apply to both the Abdālī and Abū Aḥmad. I also propose that the Abdālī may be linked to Ḥasan Abdāl, the patron saint of Qandahar, and that this

assertion is more convincing on historical grounds than the theory linking the Abdālī to the tenth century Chishtī saint, Abū Aḥmad Abdāl.

While compelling, these hypotheses are admittedly not supported by any conclusive body of evidence. The view that Abū Aḥmad's epithet, Abdāl, hearkens back to the Hephthalite past is based on a re-interpretation of the Chishtī hagiographical literature as it relates to the meaning and significance of this term. We are on equally uncertain footing when it comes to the history of the Abdālī confederacy. Besides what little is found in histories written beginning in the early Mughal period, practically no other information has survived about the early history of the Abdālī, which makes it difficult to arrive at definitive conclusions concerning their possible connections to either the Hephthalites or Ḥasan Abdāl. What can be said with more certainty, however, is that by the time the Abdālī become firmly embedded in the historical record in the sixteenth century, the sources attribute to them a distinctly Afghan identity and point to Qandahar as the confederacy's principal habitation. And so it is from this point that our analysis of the early history of the Abdālī shall commence.

Chapter 4: The Early History of the Abdālī

4.1: Early Notices of the Abdālī in the Historical Record

The Abdālī begin to appear with consistency in sources produced beginning in the early Mughal period, or roughly from the mid-sixteenth century onwards. As Raverty noted, the reference to a group named “Abdāl” in the so-called “Yūsufzay chronicle,” which is better known by the title *Tawārīkh-i Ḥāfiẓ Raḥmat Khānī*, may hint at some Abdālī having served as one of a multitude of tribal factions (*aqwām*) that formed part of the army of the Yūsufzay leader Khān Kājū—alleged to have been 140,000 strong—against the Ghōriya Khēl during the Battle of Shaykh Tapūr that took place at Peshawar in ca. 956–57/1549–50.¹

The Abdālī make a brief appearance in Bāyazīd Bayāt’s chronicle detailing the reign of the Mughal emperor Humāyūn (d. 963/1556), which was composed in ca. 1000/1591–92 and known widely by the title *Tārīkh-i Humāyūn*. In his eyewitness account of events taking place in 960/1552–53, Bāyazīd Bayāt briefly describes his participation in a raid led by Humāyūn’s forces against a group of Abdālī Afghan pastoralists encamped in the vicinity of Qalāt located to the east of Qandahar. In the skirmish that ensued the Abdālī were put to flight and a large amount of their livestock fell to the Mughal army.²

Abdālī pastoralists are again mentioned in the *Ā’in-i Akbarī* (composed ca. 1004/1595–96) of Abū al-Faẓl (d. 1011/1602), the eminent *wazīr* and historian of Humāyūn’s successor as emperor to the Mughal throne, Akbar. Abū al-Faẓl describes the Abdālī as one of the Afghan

¹ On the uncertain date on which the Battle of Shaykh Tapūr occurred, see Raverty, *Notes on Afghanistan and Baluchistan*, 354. For a reference in the chronicle to the “Abdāl” tribe, see Pīr Mu‘azzam Shāh, *Tawārīkh-i Ḥāfiẓ Raḥmat Khānī*, 148–49.

² Bāyazīd Bayāt, *Tazkira-i Humāyūn wa Akbar*, ed. Muḥammad Hidāyat Ḥusayn (Calcutta: Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1360/1941), 173–74; Bāyazīd Bayāt, *Three Memoirs of Humayun*, vol. 2, *Bāyazīd Bayāt’s Tārīkh-i Humāyūn*, ed. and trans. W. M. Thackston (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda, 2009), 71–71b.

tribal confederacies (sing., *ulūs*)—including the Tarīnī, Pannī, and Kākars—of Qandahar.³ As an administrative district (*sarkār*) of the Mughal state under Akbar, Qandahar belonged to the province (*sūba*) of Kabūl and was bordered on the northeast by Ghazna, on the north by Ghūr, on the west by Farāh, and on the south by Sībī (Sīwī). Abū al-Faẓl indicates that the Abdālī pastoralists inhabited the lands to the south and east of Qandahar and that during the time of the “Qizilbash”—i.e., the Safavid governors of the province from 965/1558 to 1003/1595—they remitted a tax of 1,000 sheep, which was the equivalent of 100 *tūmāns*, and a tribal levy of 400 cavalry and 600 infantry.⁴ Under the new Mughal regime, the taxes increased to 2,800 sheep, 5 assloads (*kharwār*) of butter, and a tribal levy of 2,000 cavalry and 3,000 infantry.⁵ Abū al-Faẓl’s statements indicate that the Abdālī served as subjects of both the Safavid and Mughal governors of Qandahar in the second half of the sixteenth century and were, along with their Tarīnī neighbours based in Pūshang (present-day Pīshīn in Baluchistan), the two largest and most influential tribal groups of the *sarkār* of Qandahar.

The presence of the Tarīnī of Pūshang and their association with the Abdālī of Qandahar is documented in the *Iḥyā’ al-mulūk*, a local history of Sistan composed in the reign of the Safavid monarch Shāh ‘Abbās I.⁶ According to this work, a Safavid army made its way to Pūshang, described as a stronghold of the Tarīnī Afghans, in order to prevent the forces of the Mughal emperor Jahāngīr b. Akbar from proceeding to Qandahar in the year 1014/1605-

³ Afghan sources such as the “Yūsufzay chronicle” tend to refer to the Abdālī alongside the Tarīnī, Kākar, and Pannī tribes, which supports Abū al-Faẓl’s assessment that they were in close geographic proximity to one another. For further information on the Pannī (also known as Parnī) can be found in Raverty, *Notes on Afghanistan and Baluchistan*, 624–48.

⁴ See Appendix 2 for a comprehensive list of governors of Qandahar from the time of Bābur’s conquest down to the reign of Aḥmad Shāh Durrānī.

⁵ Abū al-Faẓl, *Ā’in-i Akbarī*, ed. Blochmann, 1/2:589; Abū al-Faẓl, *The Āin-i Akbarī*, trans. Blochmann and Jarrett, 2:399–404.

⁶ On the *Iḥyā’ al-mulūk* and its author, Malik Shāh Ḥusayn, see *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. “Sīstānī, Mīrzā Šāh-Ḥosayn” (by Kioumars Ghereghlou).

6. What is interesting is that the chronicle also notes that the Safavid forces took the “Abdālī route” (*rāh-i Abdālī*) to confront the Mughal forces.⁷ The location of this “Abdālī route” is not clear from this rather ambiguous statement in the *Iḥyā’ al-mulūk*, but it does suggest an Abdālī presence on the roads leading to and from Qandahar.

The Abdālī are again referred to in the *Tārīkh-i Khān Jahānī*, which was completed in ca. 1021/1613. In addition to its survey of Abdālī genealogy, Ni‘mat Allāh’s work contains a hagiographical account of the Sufi figure Shaykh ‘Ārif Tarīn Awdal whose name bears a close resemblance to the tribal designation Abdāl, which colloquially is sometimes pronounced as “Awdal” or “Awdāl.”⁸ This Shaykh ‘Ārif is described as an ecstatic mystic who resided along the banks of the Arghasān River near Qandahar at the time when Sulṭān Ḥusayn Mīrzā Ṣafawī, the nephew of the Safavid ruler Shāh Ṭahmāsp I (r. 930–84/1524–76), served as governor of the province.⁹ The story goes that one day, while wandering around in the

⁷ Malik Shāh Ḥusayn ibn Malik Ghiyāṣ al-Dīn Sīstānī, *Iḥyā’ al-mulūk*, ed. Manūchihr Sutūda (Tehran: Bungāh-i Tarjuma wa Nashr-i Kitāb, 1344 H.sh./1965), 408–10.

⁸ A common feature of Pashto, as with many other Iranian languages, is the interchangeability of the letters “w” and “b,” hence the pronunciation of Abdāl by some as Awdal or Awdāl; see Raverty, *A Dictionary of the Puk’hto*, 4, 59; and Sulṭān Muḥammad, *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī*, 52. Wakīlī Pōpalza’ī provides a specific example of the use of “Awdāl” in reference to the Abdālī in a line of Pashto poetry from the *dīwān* of Aḥmad Shāh Durrānī; see Wakīlī Pōpalza’ī, “Intiqād bar maqāla-i ‘Abdālī, Sadōzā’ī wa Durrānī,” 221–22. As the variant Awdal/Awdāl is used in the *TKhJ*, it appears that this pronunciation was used for the Abdālī since at least the seventeenth century; see Ni‘mat Allāh, *Tārīkh-i Khān Jahānī*, 2:760. Masson noted in his nineteenth century travelogue that the non-Muslim population of Kāfiristān (now the province of Nūristān in eastern Afghanistan), labeled kafirs or “unbelievers,” remember that their ancestors were driven into their mountainous enclaves by the “Odāls,” a term they applied generically to Muslims. Masson and authors that followed him have speculated that “Odāl” is a variant of “Awdal,” i.e., the Abdālī; see Masson, *Narrative of Various Journeys*, 1:xiii, 1:233; Raverty, *Notes on Afghanistan and Baluchistan*, 134.

⁹ This Shaykh ‘Ārif appears to be the same figure that Wakīlī Pōpalza’ī describes as Muḥammad ‘Ārif Sarbanī. Although he does not explicitly state his sources, it appears that Wakīlī Pōpalza’ī derived his information about Muḥammad ‘Ārif Sarbanī from a manuscript of the *Makhzan-i Afghānī* housed in the library of Afghanistan’s now defunct Historical Society (*anjuman-i tārikh*); see Ḥabībī and Māyil Harawī, *Rāhnumā-yi tārikh-i Afghānistān*, 1:122. This manuscript is mentioned in Nayyir’s article on the Abdālī (69n1, n4), in response to which, as noted in Chapter 3, Wakīlī Pōpalza’ī wrote his article. It appears that, on the basis of this copy of the *Makhzan-i*

market of Qandahar, Shaykh ʿĀrif encountered a woman whose beauty captivated him and with whom he had intercourse. Sulṭān Ḥusayn Mīrzā learned of this lewd affair and ordered Shaykh ʿĀrif and the woman to be thrown into a boiling cauldron as punishment. When both survived this ordeal, the governor ordered for Shaykh ʿĀrif to be sent to the gallows, but the latter miraculously survived this ordeal as well. Finally recognizing that Shaykh ʿĀrif was protected by divine favour, Sulṭān Ḥusayn Mīrzā was compelled to set him free. This incident is reported to have taken place in 974/1566–67.¹⁰

Earlier in the *Tārīkh-i Khān Jahānī*, Niʿmat Allāh describes the affairs of another Afghan saint, Shaykh Ṣābit Barēch, whose shrine was located atop the Awdal Tarīn Mountain (*Kōh-i Awdal Tarīn*), which appears to be named after both the Tarīnī and Abdālī.¹¹ Niʿmat

Afghānī, both Nayyir and Wakīlī Pōpalzaʿī described ʿĀrif as a Sarbanī (also sometimes spelled Sara Banī) Afghan since Niʿmat Allāh places ʿĀrif in the category of “Sarbanī” saints. Both authors also seem to have conflated ʿĀrif and Abdāl, the eponym of the Abdālī confederacy, whom they allege was a contemporary of Khwāja Abū Aḥmad Abdāl. However this assertion is problematic since the author Niʿmat Allāh describes Shaykh ʿĀrif as being active in the time of Sulṭān Ḥusayn Mīrzā Ṣafawī, who served as governor of Qandahar on behalf of Shāh Ṭahmāsp I. It is possible this confusion stems from the fact that manuscript of the *Makhzan-i Afghānī* that Nayyir and Wakīlī Pōpalzaʿī consulted was incomplete and did not contain the account of ʿĀrif’s encounter with Sulṭān Ḥusayn Mīrzā. Or, if it did contain this account, Nayyir and Wakīlī Pōpalzaʿī may simply have overlooked it. Whatever the case, both authors seem to have inferred that the names ʿĀrif and Abdāl are identical despite the absence of evidence in support of this surmise. In fact, Niʿmat Allāh’s account suggests that the apocryphal figure of Shaykh ʿĀrif was active not in the lifetime of Khwāja Abū Aḥmad in the ninth-century but much later in seventeenth century.

¹⁰ Niʿmat Allāh, *Tārīkh-i Khān Jahānī*, 2:760–61. Shaykh ʿĀrif is one of many prominent religious associated with the Abdālī. According to tribal lore, such figures are described as belonging to *āstānahā* or “holy families”. For examples of this use of the term *āstāna*, see *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī*, fol. 18a; ʿAlī Muḥammad Khān, *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ʿālī-shān*, fol. 2b. For Raverty’s definition of Pashto *āstāna* as “grand” or “holy” families, see Raverty, *A Grammar of the Pukhto*, 8; and Raverty, *A Dictionary of the Puk’hto*, 27, 583.

¹¹ Niʿmat Allāh, *Tārīkh-i Khān Jahānī*, 2:754–55. It is curious that the names Awdal and Tarīn should be associated with this mountain. As noted earlier, they also appear together in connection to Shaykh ʿĀrif, albeit inexplicably in reverse order as Tarīn Awdal. It seems both names are related to the Abdālī and Tarīnī tribes who traditionally inhabited the highlands to the south- and southeast of Qandahar. The complex relationship between the Abdālī and Tarīnī, who, along with the Barēchī and others, are described by later authors like Elphinstone as being among the “western” Afghan tribes, is described in further detail below; Elphinstone, *An Account of the Kingdom of Caubul*, 388–89 passim.

Allāh does not specify the location of the mountain in the *Tārīkh-i Khān Jahānī* but it was likely in the vicinity of Shōrābak, a remote area located in the southern reaches of Qandahar where the Barēchī, including the aforesaid Shaykh Sābit, were known to reside. The Awdal Tarīn Mountain could possibly be the name of one of the mountains in and around the Tōbā Range, located to the east of Shōrābak, which is described in the *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī* as one of the ancient habitations of the Abdālī.¹²

The *Tārīkh-i Khān Jahānī*'s references to the Awdālī/Abdālī corroborate the works of Bāyazīd Bayāt and Abū al-Faẓl that indicate the confederacy inhabited the lands to the south and east of Qandahar since at least the second half of the sixteenth century. Later sources like the *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī* also suggest that Qandahar and its surrounding lands represent the earliest known habitation of the Abdālī. However, there remains uncertainty as to when the Abdālī arrived in the Qandahar region. Among the few scholars who have attempted to trace the Abdālī presence in Qandahar is Arlinghaus. In his study of the Yūsufzay migrations to the Peshawar region, Arlinghaus asserts that, "In the early fifteenth century, the Abdali Pashtuns migrated from Kase Ghar to the Arghasan Valley near Qandahar. The Khashi Khel (Yusufza'i tribal confederation) seems to have been the first Pashtun group to occupy the Arghasan Valley, and was probably expelled from there by the Abdalis."¹³

Arlinghaus's assertion that the Abdālī pushed the Khashī—that is, the ancestors of the Yūsufzay confederation—out of the Qandahar region appears to rest on two main assumptions. First is that the Abdālī migrated to Qandahar in the fifteenth century. This assumption appears to rely on the authority of Raverty, who, based primarily on the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i 'ālī-shān*, suggests that the Abdālī migrated from Kasēghar, i.e., the Sulaymān

¹² Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, ed. Murādōf, 1:12a.

¹³ Arlinghaus, "The Transformation of Afghan Tribal Society," 15–16.

Range, to Qandahar in the lifetime of the Timurid ruler Shāhrukh Mīrzā b. Amīr Tīmūr.¹⁴ Specifically, ‘Alī Muḥammad Khān notes that since the lands of Kasēghar and Rūda could no longer sustain the Afghan tribes there, the leader Malik Zīrak—a descendent of Malik Abdāl, the putative eponymous founder of the Abdālī confederacy—sent deputies to the court of Shāhrukh Mīrzā requesting land in Qandahar. On receiving Shāhrukh’s consent, Malik Zīrak ordered various tribes dwelling in Kasēghar to settle in and around Qandahar and he distributed lands to each of them proportionately. The Afghans were to remit an amount of taxes specified by the Shāhrukhid edict (*yārliḡh-i Shāhrukhī*) to the governor of Qandahar.¹⁵

While this brief passage from the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān* offers a convenient aetiology for the presence of the Abdālī in Qandahar in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, contemporary sources offer no evidence of any extensive Abdālī settlements in Qandahar since the fifteenth century.¹⁶ The *Bābur-nāma*, for instance, provides a relatively detailed outline of the activities of Bābur in and around Qandahar in the opening decades of the sixteenth century. This includes references to Bābur’s exchanges with Afghan tribes like

¹⁴ Raverty, *Notes on Afghanistan and Baluchistan*, 577–78, 628–29; Arlinghaus, “The Transformation of Afghan Tribal Society,” 16n18, 93–96; Noelle, *State and Tribe*, 161.

¹⁵ ‘Alī Muḥammad Khān, *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān*, fols. 10b–11a.

¹⁶ Despite claims to the contrary, most of the available evidence confirms that the bulk of Abdālī remained predominantly nomadic in the pre-Durrānī period. In fact, the large-scale settlement of Abdālī-Durrānī in the Qandahar region and their gradual transition from a nomadic to a sedentary tribe in the reign of Aḥmad Shāh Durrānī is elaborated on in Chapter 6. Writing later in the nineteenth century, the colonial author Henry C. Rawlinson related that certain Abdālī-Durrānī tribesmen active in the early-Durrānī period regarded their land-holdings in Qandahar as *mawrūsī* or hereditary, “the right of occupation being supposed to have descended to them from their fathers as these valleys on the eastern frontiers of Kandahar were the first lands overrun by the Durani tribes when they descended from their original seats around the Koh-i-Kassa (in the Suliman range) to cooperate with the Ghilzai in subverting the power of the Safavean monarchs.” See Rawlinson, “Report on the Dooranee Tribes,” 512. Besides contradicting the tradition, cited in the *TMA* (refer to §3.4), that the Abdālī were granted the lands of Qandahar by Shāhrukh Mīrzā, Rawlinson’s report suggests that the various claims about the Abdālī as the “rightful” occupants of the fertile lands of Qandahar should be analyzed in the context of their economic and political implications.

the Ghilzay and Yūsufzay and even his marriage to Bibī Mubāraka, a daughter of the Yūsufzay chief Shāh Maṣṣūr. But it is telling that the work says nothing of the Abdālī, let alone their settlements in Qandahar.¹⁷ Since Bābur was active in the region and familiar with the local Afghan tribes, he would presumably have mentioned the Abdālī if members of the confederacy had been prominent landholders in Qandahar since the reign of Shāhrukh Mīrzā, as intimated in the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān*. It is possible that Bābur was simply not as familiar with the Abdālī as with the other Afghan groups he encountered in the region. But, as several authors have pointed out, the fact the Abdālī are not so much as mentioned in his *Bābur-nāma*—or in the other extant contemporary sources, for that matter—casts doubt over the assertion that Shāhrukh Mīrzā granted the confederacy permission to settle in Qandahar since the early fifteenth century.¹⁸

Another issue is that Arlinghaus’s statement about the Abdālī expelling the Khashī from Qandahar also appears to be based on his reading of Afghan histories like the aforesaid *Tawārīkh-i Ḥāfiẓ Raḥmat Khānī* and the *Tārīkh-i muraṣṣa‘* that describe the settlement of the Khashī tribes in Peshawar. In a passage of the *Tārīkh-i muraṣṣa‘*, itself derived in part from Ākhūnd Darwīza’s sixteenth century polemical treatise, *Tazkirat al-abrār wa al-ashrār*, Afzal Khān writes that the Khashī dwelled in the Arghasān Valley to the southeast of Qandahar and that, due to a dispute with the neighbouring Tarīnī, they were expelled to the territory of the Ghōrī located in the Tarnak Valley north of Arghasān.¹⁹ On account of another dispute

¹⁷ Ṣāḥīb al-Dīn Muḥammad Bābur, *The Babur-Nama*, trans. Annette Susannah Beveridge, 2 vols. (London: Luzac, 1912–21), 1:375, 2:711, xxxvi–xli; Bābur, *The Baburnama*, trans. Thackston, 268. See p. 481 (note 6) of Thackston’s translation for the various Afghan tribes mentioned in the *Bābur-nāma*.

¹⁸ Nayyir, “Abdālī, Sadōzāyy, Durrānī,” 78; Caroe, *The Pathans*, 165; Farhang, *Afghānistān dar panj qarn-i akhīr*, 57.

¹⁹ These Ghōrī are the ancestors of the Ghōriya Khēl confederacy of Afghan tribes. For more on the Ghōrī migrations from Qandahar to Peshawar, which closely resembled the migration pattern of their Khashī counterparts, see Arlinghaus, “The Transformation of Afghan Tribal Society,” 126–27, 147–48, 226–30, 243–55.

with the Ghōrī, the Khashī were again expelled from the Tarnak region and migrated eastward to Kabul during the time of Ulugh Bēg “Kābulī” b. Abū Sa‘īd, the uncle of Bābur who ruled the province as a Timurid scion from the late-fifteenth century till his death in 907/1502. The aforesaid histories agree that while in Kabul, the Khashī engaged in hostilities with the forces of Ulugh Bēg Kābulī, were decisively defeated, and migrated southeastward into the Peshawar region where they settled by the sixteenth century.²⁰

On account of Arlinghaus’s assumption that the Abdālī and Tarīnī are identical, he infers that the reference to the Tarīnī pushing the Khashī out of Qandahar, by extension, applies equally to the Abdālī.²¹ But it is important to note that the aforesaid Afghan histories do not explicitly allot the Abdālī any role in this affair. Arlinghaus’s view also relies heavily on Ni‘mat Allāh’s *Tārīkh-i Khān Jahānī*, and other works based on it, which represent the Abdālī and Tarīnī as genealogically related.²² But the Abdālī-Tarīnī association is tenuous

²⁰ The relevant section of the *Tārīkh-i muraṣṣa‘* can be found in Thomas Patrick Hughes, ed., *Kalid-i-Afghani: Being Selections of Pushto Prose and Poetry*, 2nd ed. (Lahore, 1893), 207–17; for an English translation of the foregoing, see Trevor Chichele Plowden, trans., *Translation of the Kalid-i-Afghani, the Text Book for the Pakkhto Examination*, 2nd ed. (Lahore, 1893), 167–78. The Yūsufzay migrations from Qandahar to Peshawar are also described briefly in the writings of Abū al-Faẓl; see Abū al-Faẓl, *Ā’in-i Akbarī*, ed. Blochmann, 1/2:586; Abū al-Faẓl, *The Āin-i Akbarī*, trans. Blochmann and Jarrett, 2:398; Abū al-Faẓl ‘Allāmī, *Akbar-nāma*, ed. Mawlawī Āgha Aḥmad ‘Alī and Mawlawī ‘Abd al-Raḥīm, 3 vols. (Calcutta, 1878–87), 3:474–75; Abū al-Faẓl ‘Allāmī, *The Akbar Nama of Abu-l-Fazl*, trans. Henry Beveridge, 3 vols. (Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1897–1939), 3:715–16. For more recent studies surveying the Khashī/Yūsufzay migrations to the Peshawar region, see Caroe, *The Pathans*, 172–84; Arlinghaus, “The Transformation of Afghan Tribal Society,” 143–48.

²¹ The role of the Abdālī in expelling the local tribal groups like the Yūsufzay from Qandahar is also alluded to in passing in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. “Dorrānī” (by Daniel Balland).

²² See the genealogical chart Arlinghaus provides wherein Abdāl, much like in the *TKhJ*, is depicted as a son of Tarīn (the un-paginated genealogical chart appears between pp. 147 and 148 of his doctoral thesis). On this basis, Arlinghaus conflates the Abdālī and Tarīnī throughout his dissertation. This view is based in part on his reliance on Raverty, who similarly concluded that the Abdālī were a mere “offshoot” or “branch” of the Tarīnī rather than an identifiably separate tribe; see Raverty, *Notes on Afghanistan and Baluchistan*, 577–78, 628–29. A similar assumption is made by Ashraf Ghani who, after providing a genealogical chart derived from the *TKhJ* that depicts Abdāl and the son of Tarīn, suggests that an Abdālī ancestor of Aḥmad Shāh named Shēr Khān was described in Mughal sources as a Tarīnī; see Ghani, “Production and Domination,” 340–44. These authors, among others, seem to treat the tribal names “Abdālī” and “Tarīnī” as interchangeable.

even in the *Tārīkh-i Khān Jahānī* where, for example, Abdāl is represented as the youngest son of Tarīn but from a different mother than Spīn and Tūr, Tarīn's other sons. This appears to be a hint at the Abdālī' being distinct from the Spīn and Tūr segments of the Tarīnī confederacy. Interestingly, other sources fail to note any genealogical ties between the Abdālī and Tarīnī. Abū al-Faẓl, for instance, describes the Abdālī and Tarīnī as inhabiting the *sarkār* of Qandahar but presents them, along with the Pannī, Kākars and others, as separate tribes. As discussed later in this chapter, other Mughal and Safavid authors were also careful to draw a clear distinction between the Abdālī and Tarīnī chiefs. The *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ʿālī-shān*, moreover, does not refer to Abdāl as a son of Tarīn or describe any sort of special relationship between the Abdālī and Tarīnī.²³ It is telling, too, that the Tarīnī did not form part of the Durrānī *ulūs* in the reign of Aḥmad Shāh. In fact, the *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī* singles out Tarīnī leaders as being among the Afghan tribesmen who opposed Aḥmad Shāh's nomination as paramount ruler of the Afghans.²⁴

The compelling evidence that the Abdālī and Tarīnī were functionally distinct tribal groups raises the question: If the Abdālī and Tarīnī are not necessarily genealogically related, why would they be depicted as such in sources like the *Tārīkh-i Khān Jahānī*? In his study of nomadic tribal formations, Lindner emphasizes the importance of reading their genealogies as ideal rather than literal models of the tribal structures they depict. This is especially true of pre-modern tribal societies where in many cases nomadic tribes represented political units even if depicted in genealogical tracts as closely related

²³ The author of the *TMA* rightly points out that the oft-cited tradition of Abdāl being the son of Tarīn b. Sharkhbūn is untenable since many generations divided Sharkhbūn, said to be a contemporary of Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf al-Thaqafī (d. 95/714), and Abdāl, said to be a contemporary of Sulṭān Maḥmūd of Ghazna (d. 421/1030). See ʿAlī Muḥammad Khān, *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ʿālī-shān*, fols. 8a–8b.

²⁴ For the insurgency led by Karam Khān Tarīnī that Aḥmad Shāh brutally quelled, see Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, ed. Murādōf, 1:26a–26b.

biologically.²⁵ Regarding Afghan genealogies or genealogical histories in particular, many readers tend to take their accounts, which are designed to depict the disparate Afghan tribes as genealogically related, at face value even if many of the tribes appear to represent political formations and not necessarily kinship-based groups.

In the specific case of the *Tārīkh-i Khān Jahānī*, Ni‘mat Allāh’s representation of the Abdālī and Tarīnī as kinsmen that were structurally opposed to the Khashī may point to all three groups having functioned as part of the same segmentary society.²⁶ But rather than indicating an actual biological relationship, Ni‘mat Allāh’s description of Abdāl as the son of Tarīn may actually refer to some ad-hoc political alliance forged between the Abdālī and Tarīnī, perhaps even in order to expel opposing tribal groups like the Khashī from Qandahar (though this theory is admittedly unsubstantiated). The hypothesis that the Abdālī and Tarīnī joined together for a specific political objective fits the common pattern in segmentary societies wherein structurally complementary tribes unite in action against structurally opposed groups. This system, which is often described as one of “complementary opposition,” implies a close territorial and political affinity that may have been cemented through marriage alliances, hence the tradition of Abdāl as the stepbrother of Spīn and Tūr. The hypothesis that the Abdālī and Tarīnī united towards some common political goal would explain why they are represented as being genealogically related in the *Tārīkh-i Khān Jahānī* and other works based upon it despite evidence to the contrary.

To summarize, Arlinghaus’s suggestion that the Abdālī pushed out the Khashī is compelling but conjectural. Although there may have been an affiliation between the Abdālī and Tarīnī in the pre-Durrānī period the nature of this relationship is, as the foregoing

²⁵ Lindner, “What Was a Nomadic Tribe?” 689–711.

²⁶ On the segmentary lineage system, see Sahlins, “The Segmentary Lineage,” 322–45.

analysis indicates, obscure and surely more complex than works like the *Tārīkh-i Khān Jahānī* would suggest. It is understandable why Arlinghaus would have conceived of the Abdālī as being identical to the Tarīnī despite the problems posed by this assumption. By relying on the *Tārīkh-i Khān Jahānī* and related sources to draw a close connection between the two tribal groups, he could argue that the references in Afghan histories to the Tarīnī pushing the Khashī out of the Qandahar region also apply to the Abdālī. By combining this data with the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān*’s assertion that the Abdālī of Kasēghar relocated to Qandahar in Shāhrukh Mīrzā’s reign, Arlinghaus could trace the Abdālī presence in Qandahar back to the early fifteenth century. But when looking beyond the *Tārīkh-i Khān Jahānī* and *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān* and considering a broader array of primary sources, one finds little evidence to support the inference that the Abdālī and Tarīnī were identical or that the Abdālī relocated to Qandahar during the rule of Shāhrukh. While works like the *Tazkirat al-abrār wa al-ashrār* and *Tārīkh-i muraṣṣa’* indicate that the Tarīnī expelled the Khashī from Qandahar, it is far from certain the Abdālī were even involved in this affair, let alone in what capacity. There is also little reason to uncritically accept the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān*’s assertion that the Abdālī settled in Qandahar in Shāhrukh’s reign.

The bulk of available evidence attests to the presence of the Abdālī in Qandahar only as far back as the mid-sixteenth century. The tradition in the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān* holds that the Abdālī migrated to the Qandahar region from Kasēghar or the Sulaymān Range to its southeast. If the Abdālī did, in fact, migrate northward from the Sulaymān Range to the Qandahar region on a considerable scale, this process is more likely to have occurred in the sixteenth century. According to Mughal authors of the time like Bāyazīd Bayāt and Abū al-Faẓl, the Abdālī were a predominantly pastoral group active in and around the province of Qandahar. That the province of Qandahar served as the confederacy’s

ancient habitation is corroborated by Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, who states that the Abdālī had, “since ancient times” (*az qadīm al-ayyām*), practiced transhumance in Zamīndāwar, Qandahar, Ghazni and the highlands to their south.²⁷ Further, judging by Abū al-Faḥl’s statement that the Abdālī were responsible for a tribal levy of roughly 5,000 fighters, we may estimate that the entire confederacy numbered at the very least in the tens of thousands at this time.²⁸

A final point is worth noting about the relationship between the Abdālī and Tarīnī. Although the early history of these neighbouring tribal groups remains for mostly murky, given the greater attention accorded them in the primary sources, the Tarīnī appear to have exercised greater influence than the Abdālī in the sixteenth century. For instance, contemporary Safavid and Mughal chronicles agree that the leaders of the Tarīnī enjoyed a privileged status among the Afghans of the Qandahar region in the reign of Shāh Ṭahmāsp I but were deprived of this status after the Mughal forces of Akbar assumed control of the province in 1003/1595. The growing Abdālī presence in Qandahar in the ensuing decades may have been directly related to the decline in influence of the Tarīnī. By the mid-seventeenth century, the political influence of the Abdālī in Qandahar seems to have eclipsed that of the Tarīnī. As the political fortunes of the Abdālī and Tarīnī were entwined with their respective roles in the Safavid and Mughal struggle for control over Qandahar, it would be worthwhile to analyze the role of local Afghan actors in this conflict.

²⁷ Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, ed. Murādōf, 1:12a. This view is supported by ‘Alī Muḥammad Khān in the *TMA*; while initially asserting that the Abdālī settled in Qandahar in the early fifteenth century, in a later passage of the work he somewhat contradictorily writes that Abdālī settlements in the province were minimal and that the tribe remained for the most part nomadic until the *riyāsat* or leadership of the Abdālī chief Khudādād in the mid-seventeenth century; see ‘Alī Muḥammad Khān, *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shāh*, fol. 27a. This section of the *TMA* on Khudādād’s *riyāsat* is discussed further in Chapter 5.

²⁸ This estimate seems plausible when considering that, as discussed in §4.2, a Safavid source written in the decades after Abū al-Faḥl numbers the Abdālī at around 30,000 families.

4.2: Qandahar on the Frontier of Empire

The rise to political prominence of the Abdālī is best understood in the context of the Safavid-Mughal contest for Qandahar in the seventeenth century. The province of Qandahar, and specifically the city from which it takes its name, served as an important strategic centre for both empires for various reasons. Perhaps most significantly, Qandahar served as a trading centre that linked the markets of northern India (i.e., the Punjab and Sind) to Iran (via Sistan and Herat) and Central Asia (via Herat and Kabul).²⁹ Mughal rulers regarded Qandahar as an strategically important frontier town of their empire while in the Safavid frame of reference it was considered the key to Hindustan.³⁰ Effective rule over the province was contingent upon establishing control of the citadel of Qandahar which, over the course of decades of conflict between the two empires, became one of the most strongly fortified in West Asia.³¹ Whichever of the empires controlled the citadel could withstand

²⁹ For sample readings on the topic of the overland trade linking Qandahar both to Iran and to various urban centres of the Punjab, including Multan, see Willem Floor, "Arduous Travelling: The Qandahar-Isfahan Highway in the Seventeenth Century," in *Safavid Iran and the World*, ed. Willem Floor and Edmund Herzig (London: I. B. Tauris, 2012), 207–35; Niels Steensgaard, "The Route through Qandahar: The Significance of the Overland Trade from India to the West in the Seventeenth Century," in *Merchants, Companies and Trade: Europe and Asia in the Early Modern Era*, ed. Sushil Chaudhury and Michel Morineau (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 55–73; Stephen F. Dale, *Indian Merchants and Eurasian Trade, 1600–1750*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 46–55; Alam, *The Crisis of Empire*, 141–43. For an analysis of the continued vitality of trade between Central Asia and India in the early modern period, and the role of the Afghans in the lucrative horse-trade, see Gommans, *The Rise of the Indo-Afghan Empire*, 1–8, 13–43.

³⁰ Abū al-Ḥasan Qazwīnī, *Fawā'id al-Ṣafawīyya*, 65.

³¹ On the citadel of Qandahar's reputation as among the strongest in Asia, see Jonas Hanway, *An Historical Account of the British Trade over the Caspian Sea: With the Author's Journal of Travels from England through Russia into Persia; and Back through Russia, Germany and Holland. To which are Added, the Revolutions of Persia during the Present Century, with the Particular History of the Great Usurper Nadir Kouli*, 3rd rev. ed., 2 vols. (London, 1762), 2:100; Muḥammad Khalīl notes that Qandahar's considerable fortifications were built up over the decades of Safavid-Mughal conflict for control of the city; see Muḥammad Khalīl, *Majma' al-tawārikh*, 11. Matthee highlights the role of European engineers in strengthening the fortress of Qandahar during the period of Mughal rule; see Matthee, *Persia in Crisis*, 123.

lengthy sieges and thus had a distinct military advantage. In light of its economic significance, it is not surprising that the Safavids' and Mughals' duel for supremacy over Qandahar characterized the history of the province for much of the pre-modern period.

The Mughal-Safavid rivalry over Qandahar arose shortly after Bābur (d. 936/1530) wrested control of the province from the Arghūnids, former vassals of the Timurids, in 928/1522.³² With the exception of two short intervals of Safavid rule in the province in 944/1537–38 and 952/1545, the Mughals maintained control of Qandahar until the forces of Shāh Ṭahmāsp I assumed control of its citadel in 965/1558.³³ The Safavids maintained rule in Qandahar for nearly four decades under Shāh Ṭahmāsp I's nephews, the aforesaid Sulṭān Ḥusayn Mīrzā and his sons, referred to in Mughal sources as “*mīrzās*” and, more recently in the scholarship, as the “Bahrāmī Safavids” of Qandahar.³⁴ But on account of a series of internal conflicts, the Bahrāmī Safavids defected to the Mughals, thus paving the way for the forces of the emperor Akbar (r. 963–1014/1556–1605), led by the prominent *amīr* Shāh Bēg Khān, to invade the city in 1003/1595. Akbar thereby reclaimed one of the realms ruled by his father, Humāyūn, and grandfather, Bābur. Qandahar was in Mughal hands under Akbar's successor Jahāngīr (d. 1037/1627) until Shāh ‘Abbās I (r. 995–1038/1587–1629) invaded it in 1031/1622 and granted control over the city and its dependencies to his prominent Kurdish

³² For an introduction to the Arghūnids and their relationship to the Timurids, see M. Saleem Akhtar, “The Origin of the Arghuns and Tarkhāns of Sind and the Rise and Fall of Dhu al-Nun Arghun under the Timurids in Herat,” *Islamic Culture* 59, no. 4 (1985): 340–56.

³³ Details on Shāh Ṭahmāsp I's campaigns in Qandahar are provided in Martin B. Dickson, “Shah Tahmāsb and the Úzbeks: The Duel for Khurāsān with ‘Ubayd Khān, 930–946/1524–1540” (PhD diss., Princeton University, 1958), 49–50, 356–58, 386.

³⁴ For further information on the rule of the *mīrzās* or Bahrāmī Safavids in the province of Qandahar, see Mohammad Afzal Khan, “The Safavis in Mughal Service: The Mirzās of Qandahar,” *Islamic Culture* 72, no. 1 (1998): 59–81; Liesbeth Geevers, “Safavid Cousins on the Verge of Extinction: Dynastic Centralization in Central Asia and the Bahrāmī Collateral Line (1517–1593),” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 58, no. 3 (2015): 293–326; also see Appendix 2 for a chronology of their governorships in Qandahar.

amīr, Ganj ‘Alī Khān Zīk, whom he affectionately referred to as “father” (*bābā*). When Ganj ‘Alī Khān passed away in ca. 1034/1624–25, he was succeeded as governor by his son ‘Alī Mardān Khān (d. 1068/1657). In the reign of Shāh ‘Abbās I’s successor, Shāh Ṣafī I (r. 1038–52/1629–42), the latter’s grand *wazīr*, Mīrzā Muḥammad Taqī Sārū (1043–55/1633–45), grew wary of ‘Alī Mardān Khān’s mounting authority and sought to rein in his autonomy. In the ensuing power struggle, ‘Alī Mardān Khān refused to yield to Mīrzā Muḥammad Taqī’s demands and instead opted to, in a similar manner to the Bahrāmī Safavid princes before him, surrender control of Qandahar to the Mughal forces of Shāh Jahān (r. 1037–68/1628–66) in 1047/1638.³⁵ The citadel remained in Mughal hands until it was invaded by Shāh ‘Abbās II in 1059/1649. This Mughal campaign to recover Qandahar was unsuccessful, as were the three subsequent invasions in 1061/1651, 1062/1652, and 1063/1653. The last Mughal invasion was particularly costly as many men and supplies were squandered. The Mughals continued to covet Qandahar but were unable to make a concerted effort to retake the province owing to internal conflicts in other parts of the empire. The Safavids maintained control of Qandahar from the time of Shāh ‘Abbās II’s conquest in 1059/1649 until a local Afghan revolt brought the Ghilzay to power in the province in 1121/1709.³⁶

‘Alī Mardān Khān’s capitulation of Qandahar to the Mughals and its long-term effects have been treated in the primary sources and scholarly literature.³⁷ The role of local Afghan actors, however, including members of the Abdālī and Tarīnī, has received minimal

³⁵ For an analysis of the conflict between Mīrzā Muḥammad Taqī and ‘Alī Mardān Khān, see Matthee, *Persia in Crisis*, 40–44, 116–18, 121–25.

³⁶ A partial survey of the primary sources on the Safavid-Mughal contest over Qandahar is given in Appendix 2; also see *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. “Kandahar, iv. From the Mongol Invasion Through the Safavid Era” (by Rudi Matthee and Hiroyuki Mashita).

³⁷ For instance, see *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. “‘Alī Mardān Khan” (by Mehrnoush Soroush); H.I.S. Kanwar, “‘Alī Mardān Khan,” *Islamic Culture* 47, no. 2 (1973): 105–19; Shāh Nawāz Khān Awrangābādī, *The Ma’āṣir al-umarā’*, ed. Mawlawī ‘Abd al-Raḥīm and Mīrzā Ashraf ‘Alī, 3 vols. (Calcutta, 1888–91), 2:795–807.

attention in studies about this event. An example of such a local actor is Shēr Khān Tarīnī. He is described as the son of Ḥasan Khān b. ‘Abd al-Qādir Tarīnī, a prominent landholder (*zamīndār*) in Pūshang, which was, at the time, a stronghold of the Tarīnī Afghans and one of the dependencies (*tawābi‘*) of Qandahar.³⁸ The sources describe Ḥasan Khān as a dependent of the Safavid-appointed governor of Qandahar, Sulṭān Ḥusayn Mīrzā. When Akbar re-took Qandahar city in ca. 1003/1595, his *amīr* Shāh Bēg Khān, who had been appointed as its governor, deprived Ḥasan Khān of his former status, seemingly as part of a large-scale purge of notables who had been tied to the previous Safavid regime.³⁹ When Shāh ‘Abbās I came to Khurasan in 1011/1602, the recently dispossessed Ḥasan Khān appeared before the ruler and surrendered his young son, Shēr Khān, as a hostage to the Safavid court. In exchange, he was granted a regular stipend from the treasury and entered the service of Ismā‘īl Qulī Khān Afshār, the Safavid-appointed governor of Farāh.⁴⁰ After several years in the retinue of Shāh ‘Abbās I, his son Shēr Khān later accompanied the monarch during his successful invasion of Qandahar in 1031/1622. For his support of the Safavids during the campaign, Shēr Khān was

³⁸ In Arabic Pūshang is rendered Būshanj or, more often, Fūshanj (the latter sometimes misspelled as Qūshanj). The Pūshang in Baluchistan should not be confused with the town of Pūshang/Fūshang/Fūshanj in Herat, for which see Barthold, *An Historical Geography of Iran*, 60n59; and Noelle-Karimi, *The Pearl in Its Midst*, 7, 29, 39.

³⁹ Fazlī Bēg Khūzānī refers to Ḥasan Khān Afghān as among a group of sayyids and notables (*sādāt wa a‘yān*) of Qandahar who entered the service of Shāh ‘Abbās I after the Mughal *amīr* Shāh Bēg Khān established control of the province, detained their children in its citadel, and confiscated the property of their other family members. See Fazlī Bēg, *Afzal al-tawārīkh*, 1:376.

⁴⁰ Ḥasan Khān may have participated in Ismā‘īl Qulī Khān’s invasion of Bust and neighbouring lands in ca. 1013/1604–5; see Fazlī Bēg, *Afzal al-tawārīkh*, 1:376–80.

granted control over his ancestral homeland of Pūshang and its Afghan population.⁴¹ One of his chief duties was to protect the roads linking Pūshang to the city of Qandahar.⁴²

Shēr Khān appears to have been on good terms with Ganj ‘Alī Khān but when the latter passed away in ca. 1034/1624–25, he engaged in a dispute with the deceased governor’s son and successor, ‘Alī Mardān Khān. The Safavid sources present Shēr Khān as the antagonist in this affair by suggesting that he harassed merchants, blocked trade routes between Pūshang and Qandahar, and pressured locals who maintained loyalty to ‘Alī Mardān Khān. But ‘Alī Mardān Khān may have provoked Shēr Khān’s hostile attitude, for the Safavid chroniclers Iskandar Bēg Turkmān and Fazlī Bēg Khūzānī indicate that, at some point between 1036/1626 and 1038/1628, Shēr Khān travelled to the court of Shāh ‘Abbās I at Qazwīn to complain about the recently appointed governor. The authors do not specify the exact nature of Shēr Khān’s complaint but it may be that the latter viewed himself as more senior than the upstart ‘Alī Mardān Khān and felt alienated by the latter’s appointment to the post of governor. For his part, ‘Alī Mardān Khān likely regarded Shēr Khān, clearly his most formidable rival in the region, as an impediment to his own authority and thus adopted a hostile attitude towards him. Whatever the exact nature of the complaint, when Shēr Khān appeared before Shāh ‘Abbās I in Qazwīn, the Safavid monarch confirmed him in his old position and sent him back to Qandahar with the military commander Imām Wirdī Bēg Shāmlū in an effort to resolve the impasse with ‘Alī Mardān Khān.⁴³

⁴¹ As Shēr Khān’s father Ḥasan Khān is not mentioned in connection with this invasion of Qandahar, we may presume that he had passed away by 1031/1622.

⁴² For the Mughal sources that treat this topic, see Lāhōrī, *Bādshāh-nāma*, 1/1:419–421; Kambū, *‘Amal-i Šālīh*, 1:397. For the Safavid sources, see Fazlī Bēg, *Afzal al-tawārikh*, 2:815–16, 2:822; Muḥammad Yūsuf, *Ẓayl-i Tārikh-i ‘ālam-ārā-yi ‘Abbāsī*, 73–74; Wālih-Iṣfahānī, *Īrān dar zamān-i Shāh Ṣafī wa Shāh ‘Abbās-i duwwum*, 88–90.

⁴³ Fazlī Bēg places Shēr Khān’s visit to the Safavid court in his account of events taking place in 1036/1626–27, whereas Iskandar Bēg lists it in the year 1038/1628–29. Also note that Fazlī Bēg gives Shēr Khān’s escort the name Imām Qulī Bēg; see Fazlī Bēg, *Afzal al-tawārikh*, 2:954; Iskandar Bēg, *Tārikh-i ‘ālam-ārā-yi ‘Abbāsī*, 3:1074.

Fazlī Bēg Khūzānī indicates that Shēr Khān finally agreed to submit to ‘Alī Mardān Khān and carry out his commands. However, later Safavid and Mughal chroniclers indicate that soon after Shāh ‘Abbās I’s death early in 1038/1629 all peace overtures ended. In fact, the dispute escalated to the point that ‘Alī Mardān Khān sent an army to Pūshang against Shēr Khān. In the ensuing battle, Shēr Khān and his forces were defeated and forced to flee in the direction of Dūkī.⁴⁴ ‘Alī Mardān Khān was then able to re-establish Safavid authority over Pūshang and return to Qandahar with Shēr Khān’s property and family.⁴⁵

After his exile from Pūshang, Shēr Khān sent a messenger to Aḥmad Bēg Khān, the Mughal-appointed governor of Multan, requesting the support of the emperor Shāh Jahān to recover his lost possessions. ‘Alī Mardān Khān responded by leading a force of 10,000 men from Qandahar in 1040–41/1631 to establish control over Pūshang. Safavid sources indicate that after this large force passed through a place called Kōtal Panjmardak on its way to Pūshang,⁴⁶ Shēr Khān and his Tarīnī followers opted to flee.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ While most sources suggest that Shēr Khān fled to Dūkī, located to the east of Pūshang, Muḥammad Yūsuf states that he fled to a place called Hījja (Macha?). It is only when he was refused access to that place that he proceeded to send a representative to the Mughal governor of Multan.

⁴⁵ Muḥammad Yūsuf, *Ẓayl-i Tārīkh-i ‘ālam-ārā-yi ‘Abbāsī*, 74; Wālih-Iṣfahānī, *Īrān dar zamān-i Shāh Ṣafī wa Shāh ‘Abbās-i duwwum*, 90.

⁴⁶ This appears to be same the mountain pass (*dahana*) described by Fazlī Bēg as Kōtal Panjaman Dira (sp.?); see Fazlī Bēg, *Afzal al-tawārīkh*, 2:822. Neither Kōtal Panjmardak nor Kōtal Panjaman Dira appears to be in common use at present. One may speculate that Kōtal Panjaman Dira is an older form of Chaman, which is the name of a transit city in present-day Baluchistan located along the road between Qandahar and Pūshang. Alternatively, Kōtal Panjmardak may be a variant or mis-transcription of “Kōjak/Kōzhak,” the name of a mountain pass just south of Chaman.

⁴⁷ According to Muḥammad Yūsuf, this altercation took place at the end of 1040/1631; see Muḥammad Yūsuf, *Ẓayl-i Tārīkh-i ‘ālam-ārā-yi ‘Abbāsī*, 75–76. The *Khuld-i barīn*, however, places this altercation in the events of year 1041/1631–32; see Wālih-Iṣfahānī, *Īrān dar zamān-i Shāh Ṣafī wa Shāh ‘Abbās-i duwwum*, 90–92. Shēr Khān’s confrontations with ‘Alī Mardān Khān are mentioned in the *Fawā’id al-Ṣafawiyya*, though in Maryam Mīr Aḥmadī’s edition of the text Shēr Khān’s name is mis-transcribed as “Turbatī” rather than “Tarīnī”; see Abū al-Ḥasan Qazwīnī, *Fawā’id al-Ṣafawiyya*, 51.

We are given additional details of the altercation between ‘Alī Mardān Khān and Shēr Khān in the *Baḥr al-asrār* of Maḥmūd ibn Amīr Walī Balkhī, who passed through Pūshang in 1040/1631 and was directly affected by the conflict. The author indicates that after taking control of Pūshang, ‘Alī Mardān Khān led an attack on Shēr Khān, forcing the latter to flee to the steppes (*ṣaḥrā*) of Afghanistan. Fearing that Shēr Khān would launch crippling attacks in the nearby districts of Sīwī and Ganjabā and thereby disrupt peace and commerce, ‘Alī Mardān Khān entered negotiations with the Tarīnī chief and it is said that they mutually agreed to the mediation of Ḥasan Khān Shāmlū, the governor-general, or *bēglarbēg*, of Khurasan based in Herat.⁴⁸ We are not given details about the result of Ḥasan Khān Shāmlū’s intervention, although other sources appear to suggest that Shēr Khān surrendered control of Pūshang and was replaced by his more compliant brother, Dawlat Khān Tarīnī, who controlled the district on behalf of the Safavid regime in Qandahar.

We next read of Shēr Khān in Mughal sources as having taken refuge at the court of Shāh Jahān in 1041/1632 where he became a *manṣabdār* and was admitted into the ranks of the Mughal *umarā*.⁴⁹ He was also assigned a land grant (*jāgīr*) in the Punjab and took part in several Mughal campaigns in India. Shēr Khān seems to have remained on good terms with the Mughal emperor until a rumor circulated that he kept in contact with the Safavid monarch Shāh Ṣafī I and surreptitiously offered to aid the latter in recovering Qandahar from the Mughals. When Shāh Jahān learned of this plot, he imprisoned Shēr Khān and deprived him of his rank. Shēr Khān was later released and restored to his former rank in 1052/1642, the year Shāh Ṣafī I died. He died in Agra two years later in 1054/1644.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Maḥmūd ibn Amīr Walī Balkhī, *Baḥr al-asrār fī manāqib al-akhyār: Safarnāma-i Hind wa Saylān*, ed. Riazul Islam (Karachi: Institute of Central and West Asian Studies, 1980), 99–102.

⁴⁹ Later sources indicate that Shēr Khān’s brother Dawlat Khān Tarīnī ruled Pūshang on behalf of the Safavids. But when Awrangzib and Dārā Shukōh passed through Pūshang on their way to invade Qandahar in 1062/1652 and 1063/1653, respectively, Dawlat Khān sided with the Mughal princes on both occasions. For further details

The expulsion of Shēr Khān from Pūshang allowed ‘Alī Mardān Khān to exercise unimpeded control over Qandahar and its dependencies and to accumulate great wealth. This remained the case until the aforesaid Mīrzā Muḥammad Taqī became grand *wazīr* in ca. 1043/1633. In an effort to check ‘Alī Mardān Khān’s growing independence, the fiscally conservative *wazīr*, who called for greater centralization at the expense of the autonomy of powerful provincial governors, plotted against him. When ‘Alī Mardān Khān neglected to remit the exorbitant payments demanded by Mīrzā Muḥammad Taqī, the latter dispatched the military commander Siyāwush Bēg Qullar-āqāsī to Qandahar with orders to detain ‘Alī Mardān Khān and, depending on the source being read, either to send him back to the Safavid court or to have him killed. Upon learning of the impending plot to remove him from his post, ‘Alī Mardān Khān negotiated the surrender of the citadel of Qandahar to the forces of Shāh Jahān. As a reward for his defection to the Mughals, ‘Alī Mardān Khān was admitted into the Mughal *umarā’* where he rose to the supreme military rank of *amīr al-umarā’*. He was also given lavish gifts as well as land grants in Kashmir and Lahore. He passed away in 1068/1657 and was buried in Lahore.⁵⁰

Safavid sources usually mention the Abdālī in the context of the feud between ‘Alī Mardān Khān and Shēr Khān Tarīnī. They claim that Shēr Khān blocked the roads between Pūshang to Qandahar and also engaged in hostilities with Abdālī leaders who were loyal to

on Dawlat Khān Tarīnī, and the career of Shēr Khān in Mughal service, besides the foregoing, see Lāhōrī, *Bādshāh-nāma*, 1/1:419–421, 1/2:5, 1/2:155, 1/2:159, 1/2:303, 1/2:332; Kambū, ‘*Amal-i Šāliḥ*’, 1:397, 3:110–11; ‘Ināyat Khān, *The Shah Jahan Nama of ‘Inayat Khan: An Abridged History of the Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan, Compiled by his Royal Librarian*, trans. A. R. Fuller, ed. W. E. Begley and Z. A. Desai (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1990), 80–81, 469; Awrangābādī, *The Ma’āsir al-umarā’*, ed. ‘Abd al-Raḥīm and Ashraf ‘Alī, 2:654–58; Waḥīd Qazwīnī, *Tārīkh-i jahānārā-yi ‘Abbāsī*, 539–41.

⁵⁰ For further details on the career of Mīrzā Taqī, see Willem Floor, “The Rise and Fall of Mirza Taqi, The Eunuch Grand Vizier (1043-55/1633-45) Makhdum al-Omara va Khadem al-Foqara,” *Studia Iranica* 26 (1997): 237–66; Sussan Babaie et al., *Slaves of the Shah: New Elites of Safavid Iran* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2004), 11, 42–45.

the Safavids.⁵¹ Muḥammad Yūsuf adds that the Abdālī of the Qandahar region, who were subservient to the Safavid governor, had their own separate leaders (*mīr-i ‘ashīrat wa sar khēl-i ‘alā-hida*), indicating they were distinct from the Tarīnī Afghans.⁵² It appears that, in an attempt to assert his own autonomy, ‘Alī Mardān Khān severed ties with Shēr Khān and his Tarīnī followers and instead turned to the leaders of the Abdālī for support. This would explain Shēr Khān’s grievance against ‘Alī Mardān Khān and his hostility to the Abdālī.

The earliest Abdālī leader explicitly mentioned in the sources is the figure referred to in the Safavid chronicles of Iskandar Bēg and Fażlī Bēg as Maqdūd Sulṭān Afghān. The latter is described as the dependent (*tābī‘*) of the governors of Qandahar appointed by Shāh ‘Abbās I, Ganj ‘Alī Khān and his son ‘Alī Mardān Khān.⁵³ Maqdūd Sulṭān is also mentioned in ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd Lāhōrī’s chronicle of Shāh Jahān’s reign, where he is ascribed the name Malik Maghdūd and described, along with his brother Kāmran, as being among the *marzbānān* or “margraves” of Qandahar.⁵⁴ It should be noted that later sources on Abdālī-Durrānī history generally agree that the name Maghdūd should, in fact, be read Mawdūd.⁵⁵

⁵¹ Noelle-Karimi, *The Pearl in Its Midst*, 79n268.

⁵² Muḥammad Yūsuf, *Zayl-i Tārīkh-i ‘ālam-ārā-yi ‘Abbāsī*, 74.

⁵³ Iskandar Bēg, *Tārīkh-i ‘ālam-ārā-yi ‘Abbāsī*, 3:1087; Fażlī Bēg, *Afzal al-tawārīkh*, 2:1006.

⁵⁴ Lāhōrī, *Bādshāh-nāma*, 2:32.

⁵⁵ His name was spelled Maqdūd by Iskandar Bēg and Fażlī Bēg, Maghdūd by Lāhōrī, and Mawdūd by Kambū. That the latter is the correct spelling is supported by the ZA, which specifically states that the figure referred to in the TAAA is named Mawdūd; see Nādir, *Zubdat al-akhbār*, 10. The TMA agrees that the correct rendering is Mawdūd (see Genealogical Table 4 of Appendix 1), also noting that the descendants of the latter became prominent members of the Afghan nobility of Multan where they were known in later times alternatively as the “Mawdūd Khēl” as well as the *khān khēl*, lit., the chiefly lineage. The TMA and ZA appear to be reliable, if partisan, sources for the history of the Mawdūd Khēl Sadōzay. For more on the latter, see Durrani, *Multan under the Afghāns*, 15, 29–30. Note that the SAA uses the spelling Maghdūd, which suggests its author(s) may have consulted Lāhōrī’s *Bādshāh-nāma*, or later sources based on it.

Mawdūd's early career is shrouded in obscurity. According to a brief passage in the *Zubdat al-akhbār*, he led an army of 10,000 fighters in support of Shāh 'Abbās I's campaign against the Ottomans in Baghdad. This is apparently a reference to the Ottoman-Safavid wars in Iraq in the 1620s.⁵⁶ In return, the Safavid monarch rewarded him with land grants, presumably in Qandahar, and the title of sultān.⁵⁷ Safavid chronicles do not corroborate the *Zubdat al-akhbār*'s account about Mawdūd fighting with Shāh 'Abbās I's armies in Baghdad. However, Faẓlī Bēg does note that when Shāh 'Abbās I left the province of Qandahar to Ganj 'Alī Khān as a land grant (*tiyūl*) after the invasion of Qandahar in 1031/1622, control over its population was divided between Shēr Khān Tarīnī and Maqdūd (read: Mawdūd) Sultān Abdālī. Specifically, the territories of Fūshanj [Pūshang], Dūkī, Qalāt, Shāl, Mastung and their dependencies spanning from Kōtal Panjaman Dira to Macha were awarded to Shēr Khān whereas the territories of Shahr-i Ṣafā and its dependencies to the borders of Kabul were granted, along with authority over 30,000 Abdālī Afghan households, to Mawdūd Sultān.⁵⁸

Iskandar Bēg confirms that after Ganj 'Alī Khān died, Mawdūd continued to serve as a dependent of his son, 'Alī Mardān Khān. This is corroborated by Lāhōrī who, in his account of the events of the year 1047/1638, writes that when 'Alī Mardān Khān learned that Siyāwush Bēg Qullar-āqāsī had been dispatched from the Safavid court to Qandahar to arrest him, he consulted with Mawdūd who advised him to seek the support of the Mughal amīrs of Kabul. Heeding the Abdālī leader's advice, 'Alī Mardān Khān proceeded to send Mawdūd's brother Kāmran to the Mughal-appointed governors of Ghazni and Kabul requesting that

⁵⁶ For details on the Safavid conquest of Baghdad in 1033/1623–24 and Shāh 'Abbās I's campaign to relieve the city against Ottoman besiegers in 1035/1626, see Iskandar Bēg, *Tārīkh-i 'ālam-ārā-yi 'Abbāsī*, 3:1002–5, 1046–47; and Roger Savory, *Iran under the Safavids* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 88–90.

⁵⁷ Nādir, *Zubdat al-akhbār*, 10.

⁵⁸ Faẓlī Bēg, *Afzal al-tawārīkh*, 2:822. The author also mentions that the Hazara chief Rōshan Sultān was granted control of the territories of Qalāt and its dependencies up to the borders of Ghazni.

they gather the forces of those provinces and wait for him to signal when to repulse the impending Safavid attack on Qandahar.⁵⁹ Lāhōrī's account is supported by Kambū, who indicates that, in 1047/1638, 'Alī Mardān Khān sent Kāmrān to the Mughal governor (*sūbadār*) of Kabul, Sa'īd Khān, and Mawdūd to the governor of Multan, Qilich Khān, to discuss the capitulation of Qandahar.⁶⁰ With the help of the Abdālī leaders, 'Alī Mardān Khān was able to secure the military aid of the Mughal amīrs in repelling Siyāwush Bēg and his forces and to negotiate the surrender of Qandahar. For their efforts, Mawdūd and Kāmrān were rewarded with cash and robes of honor. Lāhōrī indicates that Kāmrān, Mawdūd, the latter's two unnamed sons, and the other *marzbāns* of Qandahar appeared before the Mughal emperor on 3 Rabī' I 1050/23 June 1640. The Abdālī leaders gifted the emperor horses and were, in turn, rewarded with robes of honor and jewel-studded daggers.⁶¹

The references to Mawdūd and Kāmrān appearing before Shāh Jahān would indicate that these Abdālī leaders maintained their privileges in Qandahar after the Mughal takeover and continued to receive patronage from the Mughal court. The *Zubdat al-akhbār* notes that Mawdūd helped secure control of various fortresses in the vicinity of Qandahar on behalf of the Mughals and was given land grants in the vicinity of Kabul in addition to his landholdings in Qandahar.⁶² However Mawdūd was killed in 1053/1643, apparently as a result of an altercation with Mīr Yaḥyā, the finance minister (*dīwān*) of Kabul.⁶³

⁵⁹ Lāhōrī, *Bādshāh-nāma*, 2:31–34.

⁶⁰ Kambū, *'Amal-i Ṣāliḥ*, 2:227–28.

⁶¹ Lāhōrī, *Bādshāh-nāma*, 2:36, 2:151. Lāhōrī's account is largely reproduced in the ZA; see Nādir, *Zubdat al-akhbār*, 10–13. Whereas Lāhōrī does not specify the names of Mawdūd's sons, the ZA and TMA suggest his two sons were Shāh Ḥusayn and Allāh Dād. In addition to the foregoing, see 'Alī Muḥammad Khān, *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i 'ālī-shān*, fol. 25a.

⁶² Nādir, *Zubdat al-akhbār*, 12.

⁶³ Lāhōrī, *Bādshāh-nāma*, 2:348; Kambū, *'Amal-i Ṣāliḥ*, 2:326. For the office of the *dīwān* in the Mughal state, which, in contrast to its Iranian counterpart, came to apply more specifically to the head of the financial

Mawdūd's eldest son Shāh Ḥusayn succeeded him as chief of the Abdālī.⁶⁴ He was in Qandahar at the time of Shāh 'Abbās II's invasion in 1058/1649. When 'Abbās II returned to Herat after capturing Qandahar, a rumor spread that the Mughals were preparing to retake the citadel. Shāh Ḥusayn Abdālī kept the looming invasion secret from the Safavid military commander, Miḥrāb Khān, who was left behind to govern Qandahar, and made his way to the town of Shahr-i Ṣafā where the Mughal forces led by Prince Awrangzīb were stationed.⁶⁵ Shāh Ḥusayn advised Awrangzīb to attack Qandahar because 'Abbās II had not left a large enough force to support Miḥrāb Khān and the locals would not support him.⁶⁶ The ensuing siege of Qandahar in 1059/1649 proved unsuccessful. Nevertheless, on retreating to Multan, Awrangzīb rewarded Shāh Ḥusayn for his loyalty to the Mughal cause by appointing him a *mansabdār*, providing him land grants (*jāgīr*) in the Punjab, and awarding him the honorific title of Wafādār Khān (lit., Faithful Chief). In addition to participating in campaigns in other parts of the Mughal realm, Shāh Ḥusayn also took part in the campaigns of the Mughal princes Awrangzīb (Rajab-Shawwāl 1062/May-August 1652) and Dārā Shukōh (Dhū al-Qa'da 1063/September-October 1653) in Qandahar.⁶⁷ It is said that during the last failed Mughal attempt to retake Qandahar, Shāh Ḥusayn brazenly killed an emissary in the presence of

department, see *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., s.v. "Dīwān, v. India" (by A. S. Bazmee Ansari); Athar Ali, *The Apparatus of Empire*, xxi–xxiii, xxv. N.b., in the ZA's version of events, Mawdūd was, in fact, murdered in his tent by a group of Afghans of Jalālābād for involving himself in a local marriage dispute; see Nādir, *Zubdat al-akhbār*, 12–13. It is difficult to reconcile ZA's version of events with that given by Lāhōrī and Kambū.

⁶⁴ For Shāh Ḥusayn succeeding his father as the head of the Abdālī *īl* or "people" in Qandahar under the Mughals, see Walī-Qulī Shāmlū, *Qīṣaṣ al-khāqānī*, 1:424–25, 1:437–38; Nādir, *Zubdat al-akhbār*, 13. 'Ināyat Khān does not call him Shāh but instead refers to him as Malik Ḥusayn, the son of Malik Ma'dūd, and as a *zamīndār* of Qandahar; see 'Ināyat Khān, *The Shah Jahan Nama*, 427.

⁶⁵ Kambū, *Amal-i Ṣāliḥ*, 3:64; 'Ināyat Khān, *The Shah Jahan Nama*, 427.

⁶⁶ Waḥīd Qazwīnī, *Tārīkh-i jahānārā-yi 'Abbāsī*, 503; Wāliḥ-Iṣfahānī, *Īrān dar zamān-i Shāh Ṣafī wa Shāh 'Abbās-i duwum*, 481; Walī-Qulī Shāmlū, *Qīṣaṣ al-khāqānī*, 1:436–38; Kambū, *Amal-i Ṣāliḥ*, 3:104.

⁶⁷ Kambū, *Amal-i Ṣāliḥ*, 3:195.

Dārā Shukōh and, as a result, was arrested and deprived of his rank. Dārā Shukōh's younger brother, Awrangzib, who later ascended to the Mughal throne with the imperial title 'Ālamgīr I (r. 1068–1118/1658–1707), eventually restored Shāh Ḥusayn to his former rank. Shāh Ḥusayn died in 1069/1659 in Multan where his descendants remained prominent members of the local Afghan aristocracy through to the Sikh conquest of the city in 1233/1818.⁶⁸

On account of the general neglect of the pre-Durrānī history of the Abdālī, their rise to political influence in the course of the seventeenth century remains largely obscure. But as the above analysis shows, it is clear the Abdālī were in positions of influence in Qandahar, the future capital of the Durrānī empire, from at least the latter part of Shāh 'Abbās I's reign. The information about specific Abdālī chiefs like Mawdūd and Kāmrān demonstrate that the confederacy's leadership was among the prominent landowners and *marzbāns* of Qandahar. Their duties are not explicitly spelled out but they likely included patrolling the Safavid-Mughal frontier in order to ensure the steady flow of trade through the province of Qandahar.⁶⁹ Indeed, the sources typically mention the Abdālī in connection with important trade entrepôts between Mughal India and Safavid Khurasan. This includes well-known cities like Qandahar and Multan as well as more obscure locales like Shahr-i Ṣafā, a town

⁶⁸ "Malik Ḥusayn Abdālī" as a Mughal *mansabdār* is described in Athar Ali, *The Apparatus of Empire*, 238 (no. S4613), 255 (no. S5210), and 272 (no. S5740). His being awarded the honorific of Wafādār Khān is mentioned in Muḥammad Kāẓim ibn Muḥammad Amīn, *'Ālamgīr-nāma*, ed. Khādīm Ḥusayn and 'Abd al-Ḥayy, 2 vols. (Calcutta, 1868), 2:981; Walī-Qulī Shāmlū, *Qīṣaṣ al-khāqānī*, 1:437–38; and Maḥmūd al-Mūsawī, *Aḥwāl-i aqwām-i chahārgāna-i Afghān*, fol. 5b. For further information on Shāh Ḥusayn, see Dasti, *Multan*, 162–63; Noelle-Karimi, "The Abdali Afghans," 32, 36–37; and Noelle-Karimi, *The Pearl in Its Midst*, 76, 80–81.

⁶⁹ On the economic importance of protecting the roads between India and Khurasan to the Safavids and Mughals, see Floor, "Arduous Travelling," 209–10. As Floor notes, these roads made for perilous travelling and were in need of security, especially against Afghan tribes liable to loot trade-caravans. In this context, it is evident that the Abdālī *marzbāns* served a crucial function as intermediaries between the Afghan tribes and Mughal/Safavid officials.

located just east of Qandahar that served as a stop-over for merchants and other travellers to and from Ghazni, Kabul and beyond. That Mawdūd and Kāmṛān are documented to have remitted gifts of horses to Shāh Jahān indicates that the Abdālī participated in some capacity in the lucrative horse trade that linked the markets of Central Asia and Iran to Mughal India and passed through Qandahar.⁷⁰ This is supported by sources like the *Zubdat al-akhbār*, which notes that many Afghans relocated from Qandahar to Multan and participated in overland trade that brought horses, camels, fruits, and various rare items destined for India from *wilāyat*, here apparently a reference to Khurasan, while precious goods, textiles, and other items were transported from India to Khurasan.⁷¹

The involvement of the Abdālī in the vibrant trade between Qandahar and Multan, which persisted well into the nineteenth century, was likely a pivotal factor behind the confederacy's growing participation in local politics.⁷² This interpretation is supported by the frequent interactions of Abdālī leaders with Safavid and Mughal officials in the region. The noteworthy examples of Mawdūd advising the former Safavid governor 'Alī Mardān Khān to surrender control of Qandahar to the Mughals in 1638 and of Shāh Ḥusayn b. Mawdūd's support of Mughal attempts to recapture the city have already been discussed. To these examples may be added 'Ināyat Khān's reference to a group of unspecified Abdālī chiefs meeting with Dārā Shukōh outside the city of Qandahar during the latter's invasion in

⁷⁰ For a brief description of Abdālī merchants in Qandahar and Multan, see Gommans, *The Rise of the Indo-Afghan Empire*, 34–39. A more recent analysis of the Abdālī along Multan-Qandahar trade route is given in Noelle-Karimi, "The Abdali Afghans," 31–38. Gommans' study also contains an excellent analysis of the importance of the horse trade between Central Asia and Iran in facilitating the rise of Afghan empires in India.

⁷¹ Nādir, *Zubdat al-akhbār*, 18–20. On the growing participation in trade among the Afghan tribes of the Qandahar region in Mughal times, also see Floor, "Arduous Travelling," 209.

⁷² As noted above, according to local tradition Kasēghar or the Sulaymān Range located in the highlands to the south and east of Qandahar and to the north and west of the Indus represent the ancestral homeland of the Abdālī. This would explain the particularly strong presence of the Abdālī *ulūs* along the routes linking Qandahar to Multan via Quetta.

1063/1653.⁷³ The close involvement of Abdālī chiefs in such political affairs placed the confederacy's leadership in a prime position to fill the power vacuum created by breakdown of Safavid and Mughal authority in Indo-Khurasan.

While this evidence shows that the Abdālī continued to wield influence in Qandahar in the latter half of the seventeenth century, the sparseness of data makes it difficult to offer details concerning the extent of their authority. One reason for this general absence of references to affairs in Qandahar in the historiography is that following Dārā Shukōh's last failed attempt to retake the province, the Mughals focused their attention on managing the affairs of the other territories of their empire in India. The resultant neglect of Qandahar is reflected in contemporary Mughal chronicles that provide little information about the history of Qandahar after 1063/1653. Likewise, most Safavid chronicles are silent on the late-seventeenth century history of the province. An exception is Waḥīd Qazwīnī's chronicle, which briefly refers to the altercations of the Abdālī leader, Qalandar Sulṭān, and his father (*wālid*), Khudādād Sulṭān, with the Safavid governors of Qandahar.⁷⁴ But apart from sporadic references of this sort, contemporary chronicles provide little information on local affairs.

This brief survey of Abdālī-Safavid tensions in Qandahar, along with the high turnover of its provincial governors, reflects the fact that the late seventeenth century was

⁷³ 'Ināyat Khān, *The Shah Jahan Nama*, 484–85.

⁷⁴ The Arabo-Persian term for father, *wālid*, appears in Ibrāhīm Dihgān's edition of the Waḥīd Qazwīnī's chronicle, which was published under the title *‘Abbās-nāma*; see Muḥammad Ṭāhir Waḥīd Qazwīnī, *‘Abbās-nāma*, ed. Ibrāhīm Dihgān (Arāk: Kitābfurūshī-i Dāwūdī, 1329 H.sh./1951), 120. However, in the more recent edition of the chronicle, edited by Sa‘īd Mīr Muḥammad Ṣādiq, we instead find the Arabo-Persian term for son, *walad*; see Waḥīd Qazwīnī, *Tārīkh-i jahānārā-yi ‘Abbāsī*, 742. The reason for this discrepancy (whether it was a simple misreading of the text, an error in transcription, or otherwise) between the two editions of Waḥīd Qazwīnī's chronicle is unclear. Whatever the case, here the view that Qalandar Sulṭān was the son of Khudādād Sulṭān is adopted since it is also corroborated in the *TMA*; see ‘Alī Muḥammad Khān, *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān*, fols. 27b–28a; also see Kamal Khan, *Rise of Saddozais*, 92–95. The altercation between the Abdālī chiefs and the Safavid governors of Qandahar is also discussed in Noelle-Karimi, “The Abdali Afghans,” 32.

a turbulent period in the region, a factor that helps explain the neglect of local affairs in Qandahar in Safavid sources written in the decades after Shāh ‘Abbās II’s invasion of the province in 1058/1649. It is not until the early eighteenth century that the Abdālī are mentioned with more regularity in sources, usually in relation to the Afghan revolt that brought an end to Safavid rule in Qandahar in 1121/1709 and that precipitated the establishment of Abdālī political rule in Herat in ca. 1128/1716. Among the most informative sources for the intervening years of Abdālī history are the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* and *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān*. But before examining the contents of these genealogical histories as they relate to this obscure period, it is necessary to first address some of the problems and limitations they pose as historical sources.

4.3: Abdālī Genealogical Histories and the Reclamation of the Abdālī Past

The *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* and the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān* are perhaps the most informative sources for the history of the Abdālī in the pre-Durrānī period. But as noted in Chapter 2, both texts also present significant limitations, including the fact that they were written decades after the formation of Abdālī-Durrānī political rule but before a coherent tradition of the confederacy’s history had taken shape in the historiography. In their efforts to construct a comprehensive and cohesive narrative of Abdālī history, the authors of these genealogical histories appear to have relied on both oral and textual sources of information. The analysis below highlights examples where the authors melded together elements of Abdālī folklore with the accounts of better-known Afghans whose deeds are recounted in the historiography. The result was the invention of a new tradition of the Abdālī past.

Shēr Khān Tarīnī’s Incorporation into Abdālī Lore

An example of the construction of this new Abdālī mythistory can be detected in the account of one of the central leaders described in the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī*, Shēr Khān b. Khwāja Khiḡr. According to the account of events, after Khwāja Khiḡr b. Sadō passed away, the leadership (*riyāsat wa ḥukūmat*) of the Abdālī confederacy (*ulūs*) devolved upon his eldest son Khudādād Sulṭān b. Khwāja Khiḡr. When Khudādād later abdicated, leadership devolved on his brother Shēr Khān b. Khwāja Khiḡr. During Shēr Khān's tenure as Abdālī chief, the unnamed *bēglarbēg* of Qandahar sent a detachment to Pūshang to collect taxes.⁷⁵ However on its way back the Safavid detachment was attacked by a group of Abdālī marauders at the Kōjak Pass located between Pūshang and Qandahar. The Safavid force was decimated and its goods plundered. When the *bēglarbēg* demanded the culprits be sent to Qandahar, Shēr Khān made excuses as to why they could not be apprehended. Unsatisfied with this inaction, the *bēglarbēg* attacked the Abdālī of the Qandahar region and thus sparked an intense feud with Shēr Khān.⁷⁶

The *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī*'s account of the dispute between Shēr Khān b. Khwāja Khiḡr and the Safavid *bēglarbēg* of Qandahar bears uncanny resemblance to the Safavid and Mughal accounts of Shēr Khān Tarīnī and his conflict with 'Alī Mardān Khān described earlier in this chapter. The main difference is that the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* represents its Shēr Khān as a prominent Abdālī chief and, in fact, an ancestor of Aḥmad Shāh Durrānī. The similarities between the accounts of the "Abdālī" and "Tarīnī" Shēr Khāns has even led some scholars to assert that the Shēr Khān described in the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* as Shēr Khān

⁷⁵ The generic use of the term *bēglarbēg* in reference to the Safavid governors confirms that the account was written retrospectively and was not based on contemporary sources, which would surely have included the names and titles of the different governors.

⁷⁶ *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī*, fols. 32a–33b.

“Tarīnī” are one and the same.⁷⁷ But this view is untenable on several grounds. As noted earlier in this chapter, contemporary Safavid chroniclers were careful to distinguish between the Abdālī and the Tarīnī, suggesting Shēr Khān Tarīnī was not an Abdālī. Further, contemporary sources agree that Shēr Khān was the son of Ḥasan Khān, a Tarīnī landowner (*zamīndār*) based in Pūshang, whereas the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* describes Shēr Khān as a son of Khwāja Khizr b. Sadō based in Shahr-i Ṣafā.⁷⁸ And while later Mughal sources show that Shēr Khān Tarīnī entered Mughal service and eventually died in Agra, the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* curiously omits such noteworthy details. An alternative explanation for the similarities between the accounts of the two Shēr Khāns is that the author(s) of the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* incorporated elements of the above accounts of Shēr Khān Tarīnī into their work and presented him as an Abdālī chief belonging to the Sadōzay clan. This view is all the more plausible when considering the fact that no other primary sources on the Abdālī—whether it be Safavid and Mughal chronicles of the seventeenth century or the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān*—refer to any prominent Abdālī leader named Shēr Khān.⁷⁹

With respect to the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān*, there is reason to believe that its account of Sadō, particularly the latter’s purported encounter with Shāh ‘Abbās I, was also modeled on earlier written accounts of Shēr Khān Tarīnī. According to its narrative, Sadō was not on good terms with Shāh Bēg Khān, whom Akbar had appointed as governor of Qandahar after capturing the city in 1003/1595. Sadō appeared before Shāh ‘Abbās I in Herat in 1006/1598 at which time the Safavid monarch granted him many honors including the

⁷⁷ For example, see Ghani, “Production and Domination,” 325–26, 344.

⁷⁸ See *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī*, fol. 34a, where Shahr-i Ṣafā is described as Shēr Khān’s place of residence (*maqarr*).

⁷⁹ Whereas the SSA gives the names of Khwāja Khizr’s sons as Shēr Khān and Khudādād Sulṭān, the TMA names them Sulṭān Sarmast and Sulṭān Khudādād. For further details, see the genealogical tables given in Appendix 1.

title of “Chief of the Afghans” (*mīr-i Afghānī*).⁸⁰ Sadō also aided Shāh ‘Abbās I during his invasion of Qandahar in 1031/1622 and was rewarded with control over the citadel of Shahr-i Ṣafā.⁸¹ The account of Sadō bears striking resemblances to the Safavid and Mughal accounts of Shēr Khān Tarīnī, which have been discussed earlier in this chapter. According to these accounts, Shēr Khān Tarīnī’s father, Ḥasan Khān, had a falling out with the Mughal official, Shāh Bēg Khān, after which he appeared before Shāh ‘Abbās I at Farāh, located just south of Herat, to pay his respects to the Safavid ruler. Safavid and Mughal sources also indicate that Shēr Khān aided Shāh ‘Abbās I in conquering Qandahar in 1031/1622 and was subsequently rewarded with control over Pūshang and its environs, which were dependencies of Qandahar, along with the leadership over its Afghan population.

These parallels seem to point to the fact that the account about Sadō in the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān* was also based in part on the Safavid and Mughal accounts about Shēr Khān Tarīnī, a factor that would explain why no earlier sources corroborate its account about Sadō. This includes the chronicles of Shāh ‘Abbās I’s reign by Iskandar Bēg and Fazlī Bēg that refer to noteworthy incidents involving Afghan personalities, including the description of Shēr Khān Tarīnī’s meeting with Shāh ‘Abbās I and of Mawdūd Sulṭān Abdālī as a dependent of the Safavid governors of Qandahar, Ganj ‘Alī Khān and ‘Alī Mardān Khān. The same is true of later Safavid and Mughal chronicles that also refer to Shēr Khān Tarīnī, Mawdūd Sulṭān, and other Abdālī figures yet neglect to mention Sadō or his meeting with

⁸⁰ ‘Alī Muḥammad Khān, *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān*, fols. 19a–20a. The TMA’s account of Shāh ‘Abbās I entering Herat in 1006 and meeting with Sadō on his way to retake Qandahar (*Shāh ‘Abbās jannat-makān-i Ṣafawī, wālī-i Īrān, barā-yi istikhḷāṣ-i Qandahār wārid Harāt shuda*) is problematic. According to the TAAA, Shāh ‘Abbās I made his way to Khurasan to do battle with the Uzbeks rather than to invade Qandahar. This source indicates that Shāh ‘Abbās I did not recapture Herat from the Uzbeks until 6 Muḥarram 1007/9 August 1598 and so would not have been in the city prior to this date. See Iskandar Bēg, *Tārīkh-i ‘ālam-ārā-yi ‘Abbāsī*, 2:570–73. Fazlī Bēg corroborates the date of 1007 for the capture of Herat; see Fazlī Bēg, *Afzal al-tawārīkh*, 1:267–68. Noteworthy details of this sort are elided in the TMA.

⁸¹ For the full account of Sadō, see ‘Alī Muḥammad Khān, *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān*, fols. 18b–22a.

Shāh ‘Abbās I during which the latter is supposed to have appointed him “Chief of the Afghans” (*mīr-i Afghān*). Given the attention they accord leading Afghan figures in the province of Qandahar, surely Shāh ‘Abbās I’s favourable treatment of Sadō would have been recorded in the Safavid chronicles of the time.⁸² In fact, the earliest source to contain an explicit reference to Sadō appears to be the *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, which mentions him in passing and, it is worth noting, fails to note his encounter with Shāh ‘Abbās I or his status as “Chief of the Afghans.”⁸³ The same holds true of the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* and the *Zubdat al-akhbār* which describe later Abdālī leaders alleged to have been in contact with the Safavid court but curiously omit any reference to Sadō’s meeting with Shāh ‘Abbās I. These factors lend credence to the theory that the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān*’s account of Sadō is a later invention that seems to be, at least in part, an adaptation of earlier historical accounts about Shēr Khān Tarīnī and the latter’s interactions with Shāh ‘Abbās I.

The foregoing analysis begs the question: Why would the authors of both Abdālī genealogical histories appropriate Safavid and Mughal accounts about Shēr Khān Tarīnī? As this chapter has endeavored to demonstrate, there is a dearth of reliable data about the Abdālī prior to the seventeenth century. In the absence of any coherent tradition of Abdālī history, it appears the authors of the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* and the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān* looked to the accounts about Shēr Khān Tarīnī as models for their own accounts about prominent Abdālī leaders. Shēr Khān Tarīnī was in many ways the ideal figure to select for this purpose since he was a historically prominent Afghan chief active in the Qandahar

⁸² As noted earlier, Fażlī Bēg suggests Shāh ‘Abbās I granted control over Shahr-i Ṣafā and its environs to the Abdālī leader “Maqdūd” Sulṭān at this time. This conflicts with the *TMA*’s assertion that Sadō was given control over Shahr-i Ṣafā as reward for his participation in the conquest of Qandahar in 1031/1622. It also conflicts with the *TMA*’s assertion that Mawdūd, who is described as Sadō’s grandson, only assumed control over Shahr-i Ṣafā in 1037/1627 (see Chapter 5).

⁸³ Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, ed. Murādōf, 1:12a.

region, the recipient of largesse from the celebrated Safavid monarch Shāh ‘Abbās I, and famously fought against the Safavid-appointed governor ‘Alī Mardān Khān in an effort to assert Afghan autonomy. But while the authors of both Abdālī genealogical histories appropriated the accounts about Shēr Khān Tarīnī, they did so in different ways. In the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī*, Shēr Khān Tarīnī is simply fused into the framework of Abdālī genealogy and history and re-presented as an Abdālī chief belonging to the Sadōzay clan. The *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān*, on the other hand, presents Sadō essentially as the Abdālī equivalent of Shēr Khān Tarīnī. While the authors of these Abdālī genealogical histories appropriated the accounts of Shēr Khān in different ways, they did so for the identical goals of establishing historical precedence for the claims to political authority of the Abdālī in general and of bolstering the prestige and legitimacy of the Sadōzay clan in particular. Understood in this way, the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* and *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān* should be read not as accounts of what transpired but as invented narratives based partly on preexisting sources and designed to project the authority of the ruling Sadōzay family of the Abdālī confederacy over their Afghan subjects.

Between Safavid and Mughal Patronage: The Curious Case of Shāh Ḥusayn Abdālī

In addition to the fact that the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī*’s account of Shēr Khān’s conflict with the *bēglarbēg* appears to be based in part on earlier accounts of Shēr Khān Tarīnī, there is also evidence that the last portion of the account about Shēr Khān’s rivalry with Shāh Ḥusayn is actually a muddled version of a later succession dispute over the leadership (*riyāsat*) of the Abdālī between Khudādād Sulṭān and Shāh Ḥusayn. According to this account, after his conflict with the *bēglarbēg*, Shēr Khān proceeded to take control of Shahr-i Ṣafā and, with the support of local Mughal officials, blocked off the roads leading to

Qandahar. The *bēglarbēg* contacted the Safavid ruler who instructed him to elevate a local leader of influence to rival Shēr Khān. It was decided that Shēr Khān's cousin, Shāh Ḥusayn, would be named leader of the confederacy, awarded the honorific titles of *farzand* (lit., son) and *mīrzā*, and take up residence in the village of Dih-i Shaykh. The Safavid backing of Shāh Ḥusayn prompted the local officials of the Mughal state (*amanā-yi dawlat-i Chaghatā'iyya*) to petition the emperor to support Shēr Khān, and he was awarded the honorific *shāhzāda* or "prince." With the Safavid-backed Shāh Ḥusayn based in Dih-i Shaykh, and the Mughal-backed Shēr Khān based in Shahr-i Ṣafā, a schism was created in the Abdālī confederacy.⁸⁴ Because many local Afghans were inclined to support Shēr Khān, Shāh Ḥusayn and his deputy, Jalīl 'Alīzay,⁸⁵ appeared before the *bēglarbēg* in Qandahar to strategize how to subdue Shēr Khān. During the discussion, Jalīl insulted Shāh Ḥusayn who, in a fit of rage, stabbed and killed him. Shāh Ḥusayn was subsequently imprisoned for his actions and the Abdālī defected to the side of Shēr Khān. Shāh Ḥusayn was eventually freed but by this time the Afghans had thrown their support behind Shēr Khān. Accepting defeat, Shāh Ḥusayn acknowledged Shēr Khān as the undisputed Abdālī leader and departed to India.⁸⁶

Aside from the description of Shāh Ḥusayn's departure for India, key elements of the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī*'s narrative are not corroborated by contemporary sources. As an example, Safavid and Mughal chronicles do mention Shāh Ḥusayn but say nothing about him receiving Safavid patronage in his feud with the Mughal-backed Shēr Khān. These

⁸⁴ Muḥammad Khalīl states that Dih-i Shaykh is within three-to-four *manzils* of Qandahar; see Muḥammad Khalīl, *Majma' al-tawārikh*, 6. Sulṭān Muḥammad adds that Dih-i Shaykh is located in the Arghasān Valley (southeast of Qandahar); see Sulṭān Muḥammad, *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī*, 72; Noelle-Karimi, *The Pearl in Its Midst*, 86n.

⁸⁵ The British Library manuscript of the SAA spells the name as Khalīl. But given that Sulṭān Muḥammad and Leech both give the name Jalīl, and the fact that the nearly identical figure, 'Abd al-Jalīl, is referred to in the ZA, suggests that "Jalīl" is the correct spelling of the name. See Nādir, *Zubdat al-akhbār*, 16–17; Leech, "An Account of the Early Abdalees," 459–61; Sulṭān Muḥammad, *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī*, 62–63.

⁸⁶ For the entire altercation, see *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī*, fols. 34a–41a.

sources also curiously neglect to mention Shāh Ḥusayn's rivalry with Shēr Khān, who is alleged in the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* to have received Mughal support. Moreover, we know from other primary sources that Shāh Ḥusayn was supported by the Mughals in their attempts to retake Qandahar, a fact that explains why he ended up retiring to Mughal India and not Safavid Iran.⁸⁷ It thus appears that the author(s) of the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* confounded the role of the Safavids and Mughals in this affair involving Shāh Ḥusayn.⁸⁸

A related historical problem posed by the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* concerns its account of Shāh Ḥusayn murdering his deputy, Jalīl 'Alīzay, in the presence of the Safavid *bēglarbēg*. A more plausible version of this incident is recounted in the *Zubdat al-akhbār*, according to which, when Shāh Ḥusayn accompanied the Mughal prince, Dārā Shukōh, on the latter's invasion of Qandahar in 1063/1653, a certain Khudādād dispatched his deputy (*wakīl*), 'Abd al-Jalīl, to appear before Dārā Shukōh. During this audience, 'Abd al-Jalīl was exceedingly disrespectful to Shāh Ḥusayn. Although the Mughal prince did not pay much attention to 'Abd al-Jalīl's insults, they enraged Shāh Ḥusayn who proceeded to stab and kill him. Greatly affronted by this reckless act in his royal presence, Dārā Shukōh sent Shāh Ḥusayn to the Mughal court and effected his retirement.⁸⁹ As Shāh Ḥusayn was still on good

⁸⁷ On p. 12 of the ZA, we are told that an unnamed shah of Iran granted him the title of "Shāh" Ḥusayn Khān, whereas on p. 13, we are told that the shah granted him the title of "Sulṭān" Ḥusayn Khān. Whether or not a Safavid monarch personally granted Ḥusayn Khān a title, it most likely would have been at some point when he and his father Mawdūd Khān were in the service of the local Safavid regime and before they defected, along with 'Alī Mardān Khān, to the Mughals in 1638.

⁸⁸ The author(s) of the SSA curiously refer to the soldiers of the "*bēglarbēg*," i.e., the Safavid-appointed governor of Qandahar, as the "mughul forces" (*qushūn-i mughul*); see *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī*, fols. 32a, 34b–36a. The use of the term "mughul" in reference to the Safavid soldiery is perplexing since the Safavid army is usually referred to in Safavid and other sources as "Qizilbāsh" as opposed to "mughul." Incidentally, in the *HSh*, which, like the SSA, was composed in the Durrānī era, the term "mughūl" is sometimes used in association with the Qizilbāsh, though this is not always the case; e.g., see Imām al-Dīn, *Ḥusayn Shāhī*, fols. 180b.

⁸⁹ For official documentation of Shāh Ḥusayn's retirement, see Athar Ali, *The Apparatus of Empire*, 272.

terms with Dārā Shukōh's brother, Prince Awrangzīb, the latter eventually restored the Abdālī chief to his former rank and also awarded him additional land grants.⁹⁰

The *Zubdat al-akhbār*'s account does not, unfortunately, elaborate on the nature of Khudādād's negotiations with Prince Dārā Shukōh. But it does correct the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī*'s account of Shāh Ḥusayn murdering his deputy Jalīl. Firstly, it demonstrates that the figure in question was actually a deputy of Khudādād named 'Abd al-Jalīl. Secondly, it shows that Shāh Ḥusayn killed 'Abd al-Jalīl while in the presence of the Mughal prince Dārā Shukōh during the latter's expedition against Qandahar in 1063/1653, not in the presence of the Safavid *bēglarbēg* as indicated in the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī*.⁹¹ This confirms that the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī*'s author(s) failed to distinguish between the Safavids and Mughals and thus erroneously depicted Shāh Ḥusayn as being supported by the Safavids. The *Zubdat al-akhbār*'s account also indicates that the Jalīl 'Alīzay described in the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* as Shāh Ḥusayn's deputy was, in fact, 'Abd al-Jalīl, a representative of Khudādād. The latter is almost certainly a reference to the Khudādād Sulṭān described in the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i 'ālī-shān* as engaging in a dispute with Shāh Ḥusayn over the leadership of the Abdālī ulūs.⁹² In contrast to the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī*, the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i 'ālī-shān* indicates that Shāh Ḥusayn was supported by the Mughals and departed with his family to India after Khudādād Sulṭān, not Shēr Khān, was able to secure the leadership of the Abdālī in Qandahar with the backing of the Safavids.⁹³ Moreover, like the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i 'ālī-shān* and other primary sources, the *Zubdat al-akhbār* does not mention any Abdālī leader named

⁹⁰ See Nādir, *Zubdat al-akhbār*, 16–17. According to Nādir, Dārā Shukōh did not show Shāh Ḥusayn any favour since the latter was a friend of Prince Awrangzīb, his younger brother and rival to the Mughal throne.

⁹¹ The assertion that Shāh Ḥusayn killed his deputy in the presence of the *bēglarbēg* is yet another example suggesting that the author(s) of the SAA failed to clearly distinguish between the Safavids and Mughals.

⁹² Nādir, *Zubdat al-akhbār*, 16.

⁹³ 'Alī Muḥammad Khān, *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i 'ālī-shān*, fols. 25a–26b; Nādir, *Zubdat al-akhbār*, 16–17.

Shēr Khān b. Khwāja Khiḡr. These factors suggest that the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī*'s account of the leadership dispute between Shēr Khān b. Khwāja Khiḡr and Shāh Ḥusayn is actually a garbled account of the rivalry between Khudādād Sulṭān b. Khwāja Khiḡr and Shāh Ḥusayn.⁹⁴ Also, this view supports the argument postulated earlier that the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī*'s account about Shēr Khān was actually a re-configured version of earlier accounts about Shēr Khān Tarīnī in which the latter is re-presented as an Abdālī chief instead of a Tarīnī one.

To summarize, the preceding analysis has aimed to show how the author(s) of the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* and/or their interlocutors interwove distinct narrative strands, resulting in the conflation of two different personalities, Shēr Khān and Khudādād Sulṭān; the work thus mistakenly represents the rivalry between the Abdali chiefs Khudādād Sulṭān and Shāh Ḥusayn as one between Shēr Khān, the Tarīnī, and Shāh Ḥusayn, the Abdālī. Moreover, in contrast to the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī*, which depicts the Mughals as supporting Shēr Khān against the Safavid-backed Shāh Ḥusayn, multiple sources including the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i 'ālī-shān* suggest that the Safavids, in fact, supported Khudādād Sulṭān against the Mughal-backed Shāh Ḥusayn. This inconsistency can be explained by the fact that, in addition to conflating Shēr Khān and Khudādād, the author(s) of the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* also conflated Shēr Khān and Shāh Ḥusayn. This assertion is supported by the fact that the work describes local Mughal officials as having offered support to Shēr Khān whereas most other primary sources confirm the Mughals, in fact, backed Shāh Ḥusayn. These factors suggest that the figure of Shēr Khān in the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* is

⁹⁴ Upon abdicating and recognizing Shēr Khān as leader, Khudādād Sulṭān is no longer mentioned in the SAA; see *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī*, fols. 30a–32a.

actually a combination of historical personalities—namely, the Tarīnī chief Shēr Khān and the Abdālī chiefs Shāh Ḥusayn and Khudādād Sulṭān—collapsed into one.⁹⁵

In addition to providing garbled and ultimately ahistorical accounts of the above Abdālī leaders, the author(s) of the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* also seem to have confused the role of the Safavids and Mughals in affairs involving the Abdālī in the seventeenth century. Such imprecision on the part of the author(s) and their informants is unsurprising since the local representatives of the Safavid and Mughal state would have been regarded as foreign officials with whom the Afghan tribesmen had limited acquaintance. Their accounts of the interactions between Safavid and Mughal officials on the one hand and Abdālī leaders on the other thus require verification from other sources. Fortunately, the valuable gleams of light that contemporary Safavid and Mughal chronicles cast on this otherwise dark period of Abdālī history helps clarify some of the muddled passages in the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī*.

4.4: Conclusions: The Abdālī Historical Tradition in Flux

Although the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ʿālī-shān* and *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* represent the most detailed available sources on the Abdālī, each work poses a number of problems that should be considered when using them as sources for the study of the confederacy's history. One is that the genealogies do not describe the history of the Abdālī *per se* but instead the feats of a particular group of chiefs or heroes commemorated in the confederacy's lore. Moreover, a close and comparative analysis of the genealogies shows that while they agree on certain common Abdālī heroes of yore, in general they provide divergent and contradictory rather than coherent and corroboratory accounts of the Abdālī past. As the genealogical charts in Appendix 1 (cf. Genealogical Table nos. 1 and 3) illustrate, the two

⁹⁵ For a brief description of some of the inconsistencies in the TSu's account of Shēr Khān, which is ultimately derived from the SAA, see Noelle-Karimi, *The Pearl in Its Midst*, 80n271.

works agree on certain prominent chiefs who led the *ulūs* in past times like its eponym, Abdāl, and his later descendent, Sadō, yet they also disagree on the “intermediary” ancestors of Sadō linking him genealogically to Abdāl. Further, while the accounts in these works of the descendants of Sadō, or the Sadōzay, down to Aḥmad Shāh, are sometimes in agreement, there are noteworthy instances in which they contradict one another (e.g., their accounts of the sons of Khwāja Khiḥr b. Sadō). Because the works refer to many of the same Abdālī leaders, one may deduce that their authors relied on at least some common sources. But the noteworthy discrepancies between the works would indicate that they were also derived from divergent sources of information, be they oral and/or textual, and represent distinct traditions of Abdālī history.

The *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* and *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān* thus resemble typical genealogies of nomadic tribes insofar as they tend to agree on the lineages of the immediate ancestors of chiefs who were active closer to the time they were written in the early nineteenth century (e.g., Sadōzay and Bārakzay). While they also agree on more ancient heroes memorialized in tribal lore (e.g., Abdāl and Sadō), their accounts generally become hazier the further back they delve; particularly glaring discrepancies may be detected in the “intermediary gaps” between the better known chiefs of the *ulūs*.⁹⁶ Given their conflicting nature, the Abdālī genealogical histories should not be regarded as authentic histories of the Abdālī past “as it was” but as idealized “mythhistories” representing how later Abdālī communities articulated their past using the idiom of genealogy.

Since the Abdālī genealogical histories were derived largely from tribal folklore that is at present untraceable, it would be unproductive to comment extensively on their historicity. However, it should be noted that the figures and events they describe are in

⁹⁶ On the function of “mid-level gaps” within a tribe’s lineage, and the importance of reading genealogies as “present politics,” see Lindner, “What Was a Nomadic Tribe?” 696–97n.

certain cases corroborated by contemporary primary sources, suggesting that elements of these works are “historical” insofar as they describe veritable figures and events. Moreover, it is worth adding that of the two works, the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān* is generally the more “historical”; this is in part because its author ‘Alī Muḥammad Khān Khudaka evidently derived information about Abdālī figures from contemporary sources, which was incorporated into his work. Moreover, whereas the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* lacks any clear sense of chronology, the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān* includes concrete dates of events. And while this chapter’s analysis of the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān* raises questions about the reliability of the dates provided in the work, they are helpful in establishing a very rough, even if tenuous, chronology of events.

Another of the limitations of the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān* is the inherent bias of its account of Khudādād Sulṭān b. Khwāja Khiẓr and his descendants, the Khudaka Sadōzay. It focuses primarily on the tenure of the Khudakas as leaders of the Abdālī in Qandahar, their migration to Multan, and their brief rule in Herat. In rare instances where non-Khudaka Abdālī are mentioned, it is primarily in relation to the Khudakas. In short, the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān* reads like a Khudaka family history that outlines the specific claims of the descendants of Khudādād Sulṭān to legitimate rule. In this respect, the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān* may be described as representing the “Khudaka-Multani” tradition of Abdālī lore.

Although its accounts are at times muddled and more difficult to follow than the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān*, the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* offers a unique and equally rare account of the Abdālī past. An added benefit of the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* is that while it focuses on the Sadōzay almost to the exclusion of other Abdālī clans as the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān* does, unlike the latter it is not fixated on the Khudakas and gives ample attention to other Sadōzay leaders, particularly those belonging to the Sarmast branch to which

Aḥmad Shāh Durrānī belonged.⁹⁷ For this reason, the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* may be described as representative of the “Sarmast-Qandahari” tradition of Abdālī lore.

The idiosyncratic features of the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* and the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ʿālī-shān* indicate that they were composed at a time when the Abdālī historical tradition had yet to congeal in any systematic way and was still in a state of flux. But despite differing in certain details (e.g., the names of individual Abdālī chiefs, the durations of their leadership, etc.), important facts may be distilled from both works. For instance, they concur that: leadership of the Abdālī was contested between rival chiefs of the confederacy; Shahr-i Şafā was an important locus of Abdālī activity in the latter half of the seventeenth century; and officials representing the Safavid and Mughal states often pitted different Abdālī chiefs against one another for political ends. Given the important details in the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* and the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ʿālī-shān*, and notwithstanding the many limitations they pose, in the ensuing chapter both will be read in a comparative manner alongside other primary sources that contain data on the Abdālī; the ultimate goal of this analysis is to shed light on the local context surrounding the political ascendancy of the Abdālī and to thereby illuminate this crucial yet largely obscure period of the confederacy’s pre-Durrānī history.

⁹⁷ Both the *SAA* and *TMA* depict Khudādād and Sarmast as sons of Khwāja Khiṣr b. Sadō and their descendants as founders of collateral branches of the lineage (*khēl*) of Khwāja Khiṣr. The Khwāja Khiṣr Khēl is noteworthy for having furnished the ruling class of the Abdālī down to the early nineteenth century. Yet the utter lack of historical data about Khwāja Khiṣr, not to mention the very brief accounts of him in both genealogical histories, raises the question of whether this figure was invented in response to the crisis of leadership facing the Sadōzay rulers in the nineteenth century, when there was a need to designate a paramount clan that possessed legitimate authority over the confederacy and its subjects.

Chapter 5: The Foundations of the Abdālī-Durrānī Polity

The rise of Abdālī political authority was made possible by the decline of Mughal and Safavid rule in Indo-Khurasan in the late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth centuries. As argued earlier, this crucial development is poorly documented in the Mughal and Safavid chronicles of the time, which say relatively little about the Abdālī. By comparison, locally produced sources like the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* and the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān* offer more details on the history of the Abdālī in this period. But although these genealogical histories shed light on this dark period of Abdālī history, it need be emphasized that they were composed decades *after* the formation of independent Durrānī rule and thus represent accounts of how later Abdālī-Durrānī communities understood, and desired their readership to understand, the Abdālī past. Beyond their retrospectivity, each work describes Abdālī history from a different vantage point—the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān* representing the “Khudaka-Multani Tradition” of Abdālī history and the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* representing the “Sarmast-Qandahari Tradition.” Given the divergent and anachronistic elements of their narratives, it is not surprising that the works often fail to corroborate one another, making it difficult to arrive at many verifiable facts about Abdālī history in the pre-Durrānī era. Yet though these points underscore the need to analyze the Abdālī genealogical histories with a critical eye, as shown in the ensuing sections of the dissertation, they do offer a more or less coherent, if tentative, narrative of events relating to the collapse of Safavid and Mughal rule and the formation of independent Abdālī-Durrānī authority in Indo-Khurasan. When read alongside contemporary sources, they can contribute to our knowledge of the process whereby the Abdālī-Durrānī became established as the dominant political actors of Indo-Khurasan in the late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth centuries.

5.1: The Foundations of Abdālī Rule in the Khudaka-Multani Tradition

One of the central figures in the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān*’s narrative of Abdālī history is Asad Allāh, also known as Sadō, the putative ancestor of the Sadōzay clan.¹ ‘Alī Muḥammad Khān suggests Sadō was born in 18 Dhū al-Ḥijja 965/1 October 1558.² When the Mughal emperor Akbar took Qandahar in 1003/1595, Sadō had a falling out with his *amīr* Shāh Bēg Khān. On 22 Dhū al-Ḥijja 1006/26 July 1598, Sadō appeared before Shāh ‘Abbās I in Herat where the Safavid monarch appointed him Mīr-i Afghān, or “Chief of the Afghans,” and granted him a regular stipend from the treasury. Sadō later supported Shāh ‘Abbās I’s invasion of Qandahar in 1031/1622 and, for his efforts, was granted control over Shahr-i Ṣafā, a town only a few miles to the east of the city that appears to have served as the stronghold of the Abdālī chieftains.³ Sadō died on 1 Rajab 1036/19 March 1627 and was succeeded by his eldest son Khwāja Khiẓr b. Sadō (b. 1 Ramaḍān 990/18 September 1582).⁴ Khwāja Khiẓr died on 10 Muḥarram 1037/20 September 1627, after only a few months as

¹ The conventional view, ultimately based on the TMA and SAA, is that the name Sadō is short form for Asad Allāh. However, this view is not unanimous. For example, in one section of the *Tārīkh-i khūrshīd-i jahān* we are told that Sadō’s original name was Sa’d Allāh. According to the marginalia of the genealogical table dedicated to the Abdālī, which is found in a later part of the same work, the original name of Sadō (spelled Ṣadō in this instance) was Sardār Khān; see Gandāpūrī, *Tārīkh-i khūrshīd-i jahān*, 170, 182. According to the ZA, which may well have been the source of the information in the *Tārīkh-i khūrshīd-i jahān*, Sadō’s original name (*nām-i aṣlī-i īshān*) was Sardār Khān; see Nādir, *Zubdat al-akhbār*, 7. As discussed in §1.1.1 (note 23) and alluded to in the example above, in some sources the alternative spelling Ṣadō/Ṣadōzay is used, which suggests an original name other than Asad Allāh, Sa’d Allāh, or Sardār Khān. In any case, the conflicting information regarding the identity of Sadō/Ṣadō suggests that even as late as the nineteenth century there did not exist a single authoritative tradition but multiple traditions of Sadōzay and, by extension, Abdālī history.

² ‘Alī Muḥammad Khān, *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān*, fol. 13b.

³ ‘Alī Muḥammad Khān, *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān*, fols. 19b–20b. Divergent accounts of Sadō’s rise to political prominence are given in the works of Gandāpūrī and Shēr Muḥammad Nādir; see Gandāpūrī, *Tārīkh-i khūrshīd-i jahān*, 170–71; and Nādir, *Zubdat al-akhbār*, 7–10.

⁴ ‘Alī Muḥammad Khān, *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān*, fols. 20b–22a.

chief, and was succeeded as “Chief of the Afghans” by his younger brother, Mawdūd (b. 15 Shawwāl 992/19 October 1584).⁵

Mawdūd b. Sadō’s death in 1053/1653 triggered a succession dispute between his son, Shāh Ḥusayn, and nephew, Khudādād b. Khwāja Khiḏr.⁶ The latter asserted his claim to be rightful chief of the Abdālī *ulūs* since his father, Khwāja Khiḏr, was Mawdūd’s elder.⁷ This dispute precipitated a battle near Shahr-i Ṣafā in which Shāh Ḥusayn was defeated and forced to flee to Qandahar. The Mughal-appointed governor, Khawāṣṣ Khān, also known as Dawlat Khān, demanded Shāh Ḥusayn be reinstated as chief of the *ulūs*. When Khudādād refused, Khawāṣṣ Khān sent Shāh Ḥusayn at the head of an army to invade Shahr-i Ṣafā. Khudādād was thus forced to flee to Kōhistān—that is, the mountainous region to the southeast of Qandahar—while Shāh Ḥusayn re-established control of Shahr-i Ṣafā.⁸ Khudādād eventually made his way to the Safavid court and advised Shāh ‘Abbās II to invade Qandahar. He accompanied the Safavid army that laid siege to Qandahar in Dhū al-Ḥijja 1058/December-January 1648. When Khawāṣṣ Khān capitulated in Ṣafar 1059/February-March 1649, Shāh ‘Abbās II left Miḥrāb Khān in control of the citadel of Qandahar before returning to Iran.

⁵ ‘Alī Muḥammad Khān, *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān*, fols. 19b–20b.

⁶ ‘Alī Muḥammad Khān, *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān*, fols. 24b–25a. As noted in Chapter 4, Mawdūd’s death at hands of Mīr Yahyā, the Mughal-appointed finance minister (*dīwān*) of Kabul, is recounted in Lāhōrī and Kambū.

⁷ Here it is worth noting that according to the SAA and ZA, Mawdūd (spelled Maghdūd) was, in fact, the older brother of Khudādād and thus, based on the principle of primogeniture, had the more rightful claim to leadership. See *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī*, fols. 27b–28a; Nādir, *Zubdat al-akhbār*, 3, 9–10.

⁸ Not to be confused with the Kōhistān of Kabul province; see Adamec, *Historical and Political Gazetteer of Afghanistan*, 6:450–52. The term Kōhistān is used in a generic sense to denote “mountainous land.” But from the TMA it is apparent that the Kōhistān to the southeast of Qandahar and northwest of Multan is meant; see, for instance, fol. 32a, where the author describes Ḥayāt Khān’s migration from Qandahar to Multan via Kōhistān.

At some point after the Safavid takeover of Qandahar, Khudādād took control of Shahr-i Šafā while his rival Shāh Ḥusayn retreated to Kōhistān.⁹ Shāh Ḥusayn later secured Mughal support and accompanied the Mughal prince Awrangzīb during his invasion of Qandahar in Jumādā II 1059/May-June 1649. On account of the oncoming winter later that year, the Mughals retreated from Qandahar and Shāh Ḥusayn and his family relocated to India.¹⁰ According to contemporary Mughal sources, he settled in Multan.

Shāh Ḥusayn's departure left Khudādād the undisputed Abdālī leader in Shahr-i Šafā. At this time, Khudādād established control over the region lying between Kasēghar and Qandahar and subjugated its Afghan population. The Safavid governors did not leave the citadel out of fear of Khudādād, who is depicted as acting as an independent local strongman. When Dārā Shukōh led an invasion against the Safavids in Qandahar in 1653, he summoned Khudādād to appear before him but the latter remained in his mountain stronghold and did not meet with the Mughal prince. Over the next several years, Khudādād is said to have gradually “cleansed” the Arghasān Valley by killing the heretics (*malāḥid*) who held the land beforehand.¹¹ The *malāḥid* in question almost certainly refer to the local Shi‘ite—i.e., Hazara and Fārsīwān¹²—population working the agricultural lands of Qandahar.¹³

⁹ ‘Alī Muḥammad Khān, *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān*, fols. 25b–26a. According to ‘Ināyat Khān, Shāh Ḥusayn met the Mughal forces at Shahr-i Šafā; see ‘Ināyat Khān, *The Shah Jahan Nama*, 427.

¹⁰ ‘Alī Muḥammad Khān, *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān*, fol. 26b.

¹¹ Throughout much of Islamic history, the word *malāḥid* (sing. *mulḥid*) has been often reserved for Shi‘ites, especially Ismā‘īlīs, accused of heresy by proponents of Sunni “orthodoxy.” For more on this term and its application, see *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., s.v. “Mulḥid” (by W. Madelung); Farhad Daftary, *The Ismā‘īlīs: Their History and Doctrines* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 8, 12, 24; Shafique N. Virani, *The Ismailis in the Middle Ages: A History of Survival, a Search for Salvation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 190.

¹² Fārsīwān, as well as its variants Pārsīwān and F/Pārsībān, is a contraction of the term F/Pārsī-zabān (F/Pārsī-zabān → F/Pārsībān → F/Pārsīwān) meaning “Persian-speaker.” Although sometimes used as an ethnic marker, Fārsīwān is a generic term referring to speakers of Fārsī or Darī (English: Persian). The term is often

After eradicating the *malāḥid* from the Arghasān Valley, Khudādād redistributed their lands among the Abdālī. Until this time, there were only a few Abdālī landowners in Qandahar and the majority were pastoral nomads.¹⁴ In addition to settling the Abdālī pastoralists in the fertile lands south of Qandahar, Khudādād is also said to have been responsible for several building projects in the area including an eponymous dam named Band-i Sulṭān Khudaka (est. ca. 1070/1659–60¹⁵) as well as a place of worship (*masjid*) that was a visitation site (*ziyārat-gāh*) frequented by the local Afghan population.¹⁶

As Khudādād's influence grew in Qandahar, he gradually began to assert his autonomy and confront the Safavid officials of the province. According to 'Alī Muḥammad Khān, Khudādād even prepared to besiege the citadel of Qandahar but contracted an illness

used by Pashtuns and/or in Pashto-speaking environments to denote local Persian speakers. For further details see Barthold, *An Historical Geography of Iran*, 80; and Adamec, *Historical and Political Gazetteer of Afghanistan*, 5:7, 5:220, 5:244–45, 5:380–81.

¹³ The various sources attesting to the Shi'ite population of Qandahar throughout the Safavid and into the Durrānī era suggests that this “Khudaka” version of events is anachronistic. Muḥammad Khalīl, for instance, refers to the continued presence of “Shi'ite peasants of Qandahar” (*ra'āyā-yi Qandahār-i Shī'a mazhab*) after the Ghilzay took control of its citadel; see Muḥammad Khalīl, *Majma' al-tawārikh*, 9. This is confirmed by the report produced by Henry C. Rawlinson on Durrānī land-holdings in Qandahar, which was based on documents that dated back to Aḥmad Shāh's reign. This report describes the population of Qandahar at the time of Nādir Shāh's conquest as consisting of a mixed peasantry of Afghans, Pārsiawāns, and Hazaras. In discussing the process whereby Durrānī tribesmen displaced the local peasantry in the Durrānī era, the report describes a specific incident that occurred in the reign of Tīmūr Shāh b. Aḥmad Shāh in which Hazara agriculturalists in the districts of Dērawāt and Tirīn, located north of Qandahar city, were expelled from their fertile land-holdings, leaving their lands to be resettled by Durrānī tribesmen. See Rawlinson, “Report on the Dooranee Tribes,” 509, 517–18. Incidentally, Robert Leech, who was active in the region at the same time as Rawlinson, also recounted a tradition of the Hazaras being driven out of the fertile lands of Qandahar; see Leech, “An Account of the Early Ghiljaees,” 310. The actual displacement of Shi'ite peasants from Qandahar, which occurred just prior to the time of 'Alī Muḥammad Khān's writing, may well have been behind the author's assertion in the *TMA* that Khudādād expelled the “heretics” from Qandahar.

¹⁴ 'Alī Muḥammad Khān, *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i 'ālī-shān*, fol. 27a; Kamal Khan, *Rise of Sadozais*, 89.

¹⁵ According to the author, the year of the dam's construction is contained in the chronogram: *band-i yādgār-i Sulṭān Khudaka*, which adds up to 1070 A.H. (1659–60 CE).

¹⁶ 'Alī Muḥammad Khān, *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i 'ālī-shān*, fols. 27a–27b.

on the way and died on 2 Šafar 1076/13 August 1665.¹⁷ This date appears to be late since, in his account of events that occurred in the year 1073/1662–63, Waḥīd Qazwīnī indicates that Khudādād's father Qalandar complained to the Safavid-appointed governor Garjāsbi Bēg that the latter's brother and former governor of Qandahar, Zū al-Faqār Khān (also known as Awtār Khān), murdered Khudādād and confiscated his property without official sanction.¹⁸ In the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ʿālī-shān*, we are told that Khudādād's son, not father, Qalandar assumed the leadership of the Abdālī *ulūs* and organized an attack on Qandahar soon after his father's death. A battle ensued with the governor (Garjāsbi Bēg?) outside the walls of the citadel. When the governor and his forces retreated to the citadel, Qalandar pursued them but was shot in the head and killed, thereby ending his 23-day stint as Abdālī leader.¹⁹

The information gleaned from both the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ʿālī-shān* and Waḥīd Qazwīnī's chronicle indicates that the Safavids initially supported Khudādād's claim to the leadership of the Abdālī *ulūs*. But as he and his Abdālī followers extended their influence over Qandahar, they entered into conflict with both Safavid officials in the region and the local population of "heretics" who would have, even if only ostensibly, shared religious and political sentiments with the Safavid officials. The tension between Khudādād and his Abdālī supporters, on the one hand, and the Safavid-appointed officials and their supporters, on the other, helps explain why the governor Zū al-Faqār Khān had Khudādād killed and his property confiscated, and why Khudādād's relation, Qalandar Sulṭān Abdālī, was also killed in battle while fighting Safavid officials.

¹⁷ ʿAlī Muḥammad Khān, *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ʿālī-shān*, fol. 27b.

¹⁸ Waḥīd Qazwīnī, *Tārīkh-i jahānārā-yi ʿAbbāsī*, 742. There is little reason to doubt Waḥīd Qazwīnī's assertion that Khudādād was killed by Zū al-Faqār Khān in or before 1073/1662–63. C.f., Kamal Khan, *Rise of Sadozais*, 92, gives Khudādād's date of death as 22 Šafar 1074/24 September 1663.

¹⁹ ʿAlī Muḥammad Khān, *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ʿālī-shān*, fol. 28a.

As Qalandar Sulṭān had no male offspring and left behind only a daughter, his brother ‘Ināyat Khān succeeded as chief of the *ulūs*.²⁰ But the latter’s leadership was disputed by his paternal uncle Sarmast b. Khwāja Khiṣr, who, according to the genealogical histories of the Abdālī, was the great-grandfather of Aḥmad Shāh Durrānī. Sarmast was killed in an ensuing battle with ‘Ināyat Khān.²¹ But the short-lived chieftaincy of ‘Ināyat Khān ended on 23 Rabī‘ II 1078/11 October 1667 when he was killed at the hands of an Uzbek assassin hired by his brother Ḥayāt Khān. Despite the reservations of his mother, Murād Bībī, who sought to avenge her eldest son, ‘Ināyat Khān’s, death, Ḥayāt Khān, said to be the only surviving son of Khudādād, was recognized as chief of the Abdālī at Shahr-i Ṣafā.²²

‘Alī Muḥammad Khān depicts Ḥayāt Khān b. Khudādād as a cruel chief who intimidated his Abdālī rivals and engaged in hostilities with the Safavid governors of Herat.²³ His cruelty is said to have reached such excesses that the people of Qandahar and Herat decided to complain about him to the Safavid ruler—who at the time would have been Shāh Sulaymān I—during the latter’s visit to Mashhad in 1091/1680.²⁴ The Shāh dispatched an

²⁰ The *TMA* notes that Khudādād’s sons ‘Ināyat and Ḥayāt were born to Murād Bībī, a woman belonging to the Nūrzay clan of the Abdālī confederacy. See ‘Alī Muḥammad Khān, *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān*, fol. 27b.

²¹ According to the *TMA*, the killing of Sarmast led to the exile of various Sadōzay to Multan. This included the family members and supporters of Sarmast, along with dissidents belonging to the Kāmran Khēl and Bahādur Khēl branches of the Sadōzay clan who lent support to ‘Ināyat’s younger brother Ḥayāt Khān. See ‘Alī Muḥammad Khān, *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān*, fol. 28b.

²² ‘Alī Muḥammad Khān, *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān*, fols. 28a–29a. Muḥammad Khalīl asserts that Ḥayāt Khān had a brother named Lashkar Khān who is conspicuously absent in the *TMA*; see Muḥammad Khalīl, *Majma‘ al-tawārikh*, 19.

²³ The *TMA* suggests that when Ḥayāt Khān led a foray against Herat, Shāh Nawāz Khān (i.e., Gurgīn Khān) led an attack on Shahr-i Ṣafā but its Abdālī defenders, including Murād Bībī, defeated his forces. But this appears to be an anachronism since Shāh Nawāz Khān was only appointed as governor in 1110/1699 (see Appendix 2), whereas the events described in the *TMA* would have taken place before Ḥayāt Khān’s migration to Multan in 1093/1682.

²⁴ ‘Alī Muḥammad Khān, *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān*, fols. 30a–31a.

army against Ḥayāt Khān who fled with his family and belongings to Kōhistān.²⁵ After later suffering defeat in battles with the Safavid forces, Ḥayāt Khān decided to retire to India and seek the aid of prince Awrangzīb in the hopes of invading Qandahar.²⁶ He was allegedly joined by family members, including his son ‘Abd Allāh who was 12 years old at the time (this would place his birth in ca. 1668), as well as his brother-in-law, Zamān Khān b. Dawlat—the father of Aḥmad Shāh Durrānī. Ḥayāt Khān and his retinue travelled through Kōhistān to Dēra Ghāzī Khān where they stayed with its *zamīndār*, Ghāzī Khān.²⁷ From there, Ḥayāt Khān contacted the governor of Multan, Muḥammad Bāqir Khān, and was welcomed to the city on 14 Shawwāl 1093/15 October 1682.²⁸

Before departing to India, Ḥayāt Khān left behind his cousin Ja‘far Khān to serve as deputy leader of the Abdālī in his absence and advised him to make peace with the Safavids.

²⁵ ‘Alī Muḥammad Khān, *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān*, fol. 31b. ‘Alī Muḥammad Khān’s narrative of events bears some resemblance to the account of Muḥammad Khalīl who agrees that Ḥayāt “Sulṭān” was the leader of the Abdālī at the end of Shāh Sulaymān’s reign and had fled to Multan after a dispute with the Safavid representatives of Khurasan. But Muḥammad Khalīl’s account differs from the *TMA* in significant minutiae. Whereas the *TMA* suggests that the Safavids sent an army against Ḥayāt Khān due to the complaints of the people of Qandahar, according to the *MT*, Ḥayāt Sulṭān, in fact, engaged in a dispute with one of the revenue-collectors (*muḥaṣṣilān*) of Herat; which resulted in a battle wherein the Safavid official was killed. Fearing the retribution of the governor of Herat, Ḥayāt Sulṭān fled to Multan with his brother Lashkar Khān and around 5,000-6000 of his relatives and followers. Nevertheless, his paternal cousins (*banī a‘mām*) remained in Herat as leaders of the Abdālī; see Muḥammad Khalīl, *Majma‘ al-tawārīkh*, 19. The *MT*’s narrative of events presents several problems. For one, as noted earlier, Muḥammad Khalīl refers to a brother named Lashkar Khān, who is not mentioned in the *TMA*. Muḥammad Khalīl’s account also implies that the Abdālī chiefs were based in Herat since the late sixteenth century, though there is no strong evidence of a noticeable Abdālī presence in Herat until the second decade of the eighteenth century. Moreover, Muḥammad Khalīl overlooks the activities of the Abdālī in Qandahar even though the leaders of the tribe exercised influence in the province for much of the seventeenth century. Thus, while the *MT* does seem to correctly note the migration of Ḥayāt Sulṭān to Multan, its account of events surrounding his migration is in doubt.

²⁶ Kamal Khan suggests this battle took place in the district of Ūba in Herat, but it is unclear from where he derived this information; see Kamal Khan, *Rise of Saddozais*, 107.

²⁷ For the *TMA*’s account of Ḥayāt Khān’s time in Kōhistān before reaching Multan, see ‘Alī Muḥammad Khān, *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān*, fols. 32a–33a.

²⁸ For more on Muḥammad Bāqir Khān and his governorship of Multan (1681–88), see Dasti, *Multan*, 167–69.

Jaʿfar Khān thus appeared before the Shāh in Herat and was granted the title of Sulṭān. He remained on good terms with the Safavid governor of Qandahar and served as chief from Shahr-i Ṣafā until his death in 1106/1695. At this time, Ḥayāt Khān’s son ʿAbd Allāh made his way from Multan to Qandahar and was accompanied by various relatives, including his son, Asad Allāh, and his brother-in-law, Zamān Khān b. Dawlat.²⁹ Upon arriving at Shahr-i Ṣafā, ʿAbd Allāh was proclaimed chief and established cordial relations with the Safavid governor. In 1116/1704, Ḥayāt Khān summoned ʿAbd Allāh to Multan and the latter left behind Asad Allāh and Zamān Khān as his deputies at Shahr-i Ṣafā.³⁰

ʿAlī Muḥammad Khān does not provide many details about Ḥayāt Khān’s activities in Multan. But the Abdālī leader does seem to have made attempts to establish relations with Mughals, for we are told in the *Maʿāṣir-i ʿĀlamgīrī* that “Ḥayāt Abdālī” had come from Qandahar to the court of the Mughal emperor Awrangzīb ʿĀlamgīr in the year 1095/1684 and received gifts from the emperor.³¹ It seems likely that Ḥayāt Khān sought Mughal support for a future invasion of Qandahar. However, as the proceeding analysis shows, ʿAlī Muḥammad Khān’s assertion that Ḥayāt Khān continued to wield influence in Qandahar after settling in Multan is untenable and should be treated with skepticism.

5.2: The Foundations of Abdālī Rule in the Sarmast-Qandahari Tradition

As Part I of this chapter illustrates, the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ʿālī-shān* represents a specifically Khudaka-Multani tradition of the Abdālī past in that it outlines the claims of

²⁹ The TMA asserts that Ḥayāt Khān married Zamān Khān b. Dawlat’s sister, who is left unnamed, to his son ʿAbd Allāh.

³⁰ ʿAlī Muḥammad Khān, *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ʿālī-shān*, fol. 34a.

³¹ Sāqī Mustaʿid Khān, *Maʿāṣir-i ʿĀlamgīrī*, ed. Āghā Aḥmad ʿAlī (Calcutta, 1871), 249; Sāqī Mustaʿid Khān, *Maʿāṣir-i ʿĀlamgīrī: A History of the Emperor Aurangzib-ʿĀlamgīr (reign 1658–1707 A.D.)*, trans. Jadunath Sarkar (Calcutta: Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1947), 152–53.

Khudādād and his descendants centered in Multan to the chieftaincy of the Abdālī *ulūs*. In contrast, the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* (and later works that are based on it, like the *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī*) represents an alternate version of history that may be termed the Sarmast-Qandahari tradition of the Abdālī past. This term has been used because *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* is focused almost exclusively on the Qandahar region and it is also a way of distinguishing its account of Abdālī history from the Khudaka-Multani tradition recounted in the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān*, which it differs from in noteworthy ways.

One of the distinguishing features of the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* is that it does not allot Khudādād and his descendants an exceptional status in the annals of Abdālī history. Rather, he is represented as a relatively insignificant chief who ruled only briefly after Khwāja Khiṣr and was soon replaced by his brother Shēr Khān. Before passing away, Shēr Khān appointed a certain Bakhtiyār Khān³² to serve as his son, Sarmast’s, guardian since the latter was only twenty years of age.³³ The *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* also differs from the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān* in that it does not describe any conflict between Sarmast and ‘Ināyat Khān b. Khudādād, nor does it mention Ḥayāt Khān killing ‘Ināyat to become chief.³⁴

³² This may be the Bakhtiyār Khān Bāmīzay whose son Sarwar Khān is mentioned later in the SAA as supporting Sarmast’s grandson Rustam Khān b. Dawlat in his altercation with the Safavid *bēglarbēg*. See *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī*, fol. 52b; Sulṭān Muḥammad, *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī*, 67.

³³ According to Gandāpūrī, Khwāja Khiṣr had two sons: Khudādād and Shēr Mast. Unlike the SAA and TMA, Gandāpūrī does not refer here to a Sarmast. Instead, he describes Shēr Mast as the father for Dawlat Khān, i.e. the grandfather of Aḥmad Shāh; Gandāpūrī, *Tārīkh-i khūshīd-i jahān*, 170–71. Otherwise the genealogical chart supplied on p. 182 of his work closely resembles that of the SAA in that it indicates that Khwāja Khiṣr’s two sons were Khudādād and Shēr Khān and that the latter was the father of Sarmast Khān.

³⁴ The ZA refers to a certain ‘Ināyat Khān b. Allāh Dād b. Mawdūd as an Abdālī leader based in Multan at the time when Ḥayāt Khān relocated to the city; Nādir, *Zubdat al-akhbār*, 18–21; also see Dasti, *Multan*, 163. This ‘Ināyat Khān is described as a Mawdūd Khēl Sadōzay and may be identical to the to the ‘Ināyat Khān described in the TMA as the brother and political rival of Ḥayāt Khān, a Khwāja Khiṣr Khēl Sadōzay. This view implies that ‘Alī Muḥammad Khān mistakenly represented ‘Ināyat Khān b. Allāh Dād as ‘Ināyat Khān b. Khudādād. This view also implies that the TMA’s account of ‘Ināyat Khān is garbled and that ‘Ināyat Khān was not Ḥayāt’s brother but his cousin.

It merely suggests that when Sarmast passed away at the age of fifty, his son Dawlat Khān was too young to rule and so the chieftaincy of the Abdālī passed on to Dawlat's cousin, Ḥayāt Khān [b. Khudādād].³⁵ The references to the chieftaincy of Sarmast and his progeny indicates that multiple descent groups laid claim to the leadership of the Abdālī confederacy, which complicates the view promoted in the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i 'ālī-shān* that the chieftaincy was more or less restricted to Khudādād and his descendants at this time.³⁶

Further complicating the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i 'ālī-shān*'s Khudaka-centered narrative is the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī*'s unique account of Ḥayāt Khān's relocation to Multan. It states that during Ḥayāt Khān's chieftaincy, the *bēglarbēg* of Qandahar organized a gathering attended by the leaders of the Abdālī and the Safavid military.³⁷ Wine was served at the gathering and several of the attendees, including Ḥayāt Khān, became intoxicated. At this point, the *bēglarbēg* proposed marriage alliances between seven of his men and the daughters of seven Abdālī leaders.³⁸ Ḥayāt Khān consented to this arrangement but came to regret this decision when he sobered up. On the advice of Mubārak, an Abdālī elder present at the gathering, Ḥayāt Khān requested permission to discuss the terms of marriage with the families of the brides-to-be. The *bēglarbēg* consented but sent several representatives to accompany Ḥayāt Khān to Shahr-i Ṣafā to oversee the proceedings.³⁹

³⁵ See *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī*, 45a–46b. N.b., the SAA consistently spells Ḥayāt's name Janāb, which appears to be a scribal error. Both Leech and Sulṭān Muḥammad agree the figure in question is Ḥayāt Sulṭān. See Leech, "An Account of the Early Abdalees," 463–65; Sulṭān Muḥammad, *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī*, 65–67.

³⁶ The TMA refers to non-Khudakas like Ja'far Khān and Zamān Khān running the affairs of Shahr-i Ṣafā but they are depicted as deputies of Ḥayāt Khān while the latter was in Multan.

³⁷ *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī*, fol. 46b. N.b., the *bēglarbēg*'s forces are inexplicably referred to as *Mughal* throughout this passage.

³⁸ *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī*, fol. 48a.

³⁹ While the SAA does not specify the locale to which Ḥayāt Khān travelled, Sulṭān Muḥammad indicates that Ḥayāt Khān went to Shahr-i Ṣafā; see Sulṭān Muḥammad, *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī*, 66.

Unlike in the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān*, the Abdālī chief Dawlat Khān b. Sarmast plays a central role in the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī*’s narrative of ensuing events. Namely, when news of these marriage proposals spread, various local Afghan notables, including Dawlat Khān, came to Ḥayāt Khān to discuss the matter.⁴⁰ An assembly was convened where Dawlat Khān proposed that the daughters of the *bēglarbēg*’s male representatives be married to the seven Abdālī leaders as well. The *bēglarbēg*’s men agreed to do so at a later point since their daughters were at the time far away in Isfahan. The Afghans were suspicious of this arrangement and petitioned Ḥayāt Khān to resolve the impasse. But as he was on cordial terms with the *bēglarbēg*, Ḥayāt Khān advised that the Afghans follow the precepts of Dawlat Khān before recusing himself from the assembly. Now in charge of affairs, Dawlat Khān decided against surrendering the Abdālī woman to the *bēglarbēg*’s men and instead ordered the men to be killed. The women who accompanied the *bēglarbēg*’s men from Qandahar to oversee the proceedings were betrothed to Dawlat Khān’s confidant, Sarwar Khān Bāmīzay.⁴¹

When the *bēglarbēg* learned of what had transpired, he sent a letter of condemnation to Ḥayāt Khān but the latter responded that Dawlat Khān had carried out these acts without his knowledge. The *bēglarbēg* demanded Ḥayāt Khān appear before him but when the latter replied that he was powerless to do so, the *bēglarbēg* sent a detachment under the command of his military commander, Farrukh Khān. Dawlat Khān subsequently gathered his men and

⁴⁰ Not much is said in the SAA about the background of Dawlat Khān. According to Maḥmūd al-Mūsawī, Dawlat Khān used to appear before the Mughal ruler Awrangzīb through the intercession of his kinsman, the Abdālī chief Malik Ḥusayn, also known as Shāh Ḥusayn (for whom see §4.2 and §4.3); see Maḥmūd al-Mūsawī, *Aḥwāl-i aqwām-i chahārgāna-i Afghān*, fols. 5b–6a. But the Abdālī genealogical histories do not refer to any relations between Dawlat Khān and the Mughals and it remains to be seen if any Mughal chronicles corroborate Maḥmūd al-Mūsawī’s statement.

⁴¹ *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī*, fols. 46b–49b; Sulṭān Muḥammad, *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī*, 65–66. Here we see an early precedent for the Sadōzay-Bāmīzay alliance that would persist into the early Durrānī era when Aḥmad Shāh, a Sadōzay descended from Dawlat Khān, appointed to the post of grand *wazīr* his confidant, Shāh Walī Khān, a Bāmīzay who may well have descended from Sarwar Khān.

prepared to meet Farrukh Khān's troops near Qandahar. In the battle that ensued Farrukh Khān was killed and his forces were dispersed.⁴² The *bēglarbēg* then sent another detachment led by a capable yet unnamed commander but the Abdālī defeated it, too. Dawlat Khān was thus left the undisputed leader of the Abdālī *ulūs* while Ḥayāt Khān relocated to India.⁴³

When news of these embarrassing defeats reached the Safavid ruler, he dismissed the previous *bēglarbēg* and appointed another in his place. While the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* does not specify the name of the new *bēglarbēg*, Sulṭān Muḥammad suggests it was Gurgīn Khān, also known as Shāh Nawāz Khān, the Georgian prince who had been appointed governor of Kirman and its environs in 1110/1699 and who assumed direct control of Qandahar in ca. 1116/1704.⁴⁴ According to the *Ṣaḥīfat al-irshād*, Gurgīn Khān's appointment was preceded by a revolt in Qandahar led by members of the Ghilzay and Abdālī. This is possibly a reference to Dawlat Khān's altercations with the *bēglarbēg* and Farrukh Khān, as described in the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī*. If so, it would confirm Sulṭān Muḥammad's assertion that the *bēglarbēg* appointed to Qandahar in the aftermath of Dawlat Khān's revolt was, indeed, Gurgīn Khān.

⁴² The location of this battle is spelled variously in the sources. The SAA uses the spelling m.l.k.; Leech gives the spelling "Yaggak," while Sulṭān Muḥammad gives m.g.k./m.k.k. (?); see Leech, "An Account of the Early Abdalees," 465; Sulṭān Muḥammad, *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī*, 66.

⁴³ For the full account of this altercation, see *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī*, fols. 46b–51b; Sulṭān Muḥammad, *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī*, 65–66.

⁴⁴ The chronicles of the Georgian authors Sekhnia Chkheidze and Wakhusht, which offer very useful data on the activities of the Safavid-appointed Georgian officials (namely, Gurgīn Khān and his associates) in Qandahar, are both recounted in the *Histoire de la Géorgie* of Marie-Félicité Brosset. For more on these chronicles, see Lockhart, *Nadir Shah*, 311, 317, 326, 329–30. According to Sekhnia Chkheidze's chronology of events, Gurgīn Khān was appointed governor of Kirman in 1110/1699 and took direct control of Qandahar in 1116/1704; see Marie-Félicité Brosset, trans. and ed., *Histoire de la Géorgie: Depuis l'antiquité jusqu'au XIXe siècle*, 2 vols. in 3 (St. Petersburg, 1849–58), 2/ii:24–25; also see Judas Thaddaeus Krusinski, *The History of the Revolution of Persia*, 2 vols. (London, 1728), 1:152–53; Hanway, *An Historical Account of the British Trade over the Caspian Sea*, 2:101–2; Lockhart, *The Fall of the Ṣafavī Dynasty*, 46–47, 84. Assuming these dates are accurate, the foregoing events described in the SAA would likely have taken place before 1116/1704.

To continue the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī*'s narrative, on his arrival in Qandahar Gurgīn Khān consulted with 'Aṭā⁴⁵ and 'Izzat, who belonged to the Sadōzay clan, as well as the chiefs of the Ghilzay, including the future ruler Mīr Ways Hōtakī.⁴⁶ These Afghan leaders persuaded the new governor to stage an attack against Dawlat Khān while the latter was stationed at his small fortress (*qal'a-cha*). The governor sent a military detachment to this fortress where Dawlat Khān, his son Naẓar Khān, and one of his servants were captured and killed.⁴⁷ However, Gurgīn Khān was unable to subdue Dawlat Khān's other sons Rustam Khān and Zamān Khān and was forced to negotiate with them.⁴⁸ Rustam Khān decided to send Sarwar Khān b. Bakhtiyār Bāmīzay and Kata Kūtīzay Alakōzay (?)⁴⁹ to negotiate a settlement

⁴⁵ His name is spelled 'Aṭā in the SAA. Sulṭān Muḥammad gives the spelling 'Aṭal, which is not, to my knowledge, a popular name; see *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī*, fol. 51b; Sulṭān Muḥammad, *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī*, 66–67. It is possible Sulṭān Muḥammad misspelled the name 'Aṭā as 'Aṭal because the name was mis-transcribed in the manuscript he consulted.

⁴⁶ According to the *nasab-nāma* found after the SAA in BL MS Or. 1877, Mīr Ways allied with a certain Ma'āz Khān Abdālī. The name Ma'āz may well be a mis-transcription of 'Izzat. *Shajara wa silsila-i Afghāniyya*, fol. 75b.

⁴⁷ The SAA does not name of Dawlat Khān's slave; however, both Sulṭān Muḥammad and Leech suggest he was named Faqīr; see *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī*, fol. 52a; Sulṭān Muḥammad, *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī*, 67; Leech, "An Account of the Early Abdalees," 465. Leech also states that some people—that is, his informants—considered Naẓar Khān to be Dawlat Khān's brother.

⁴⁸ In the *Dastūr-i shahryārān*'s account of events for 1107/1695–97, the author Muḥammad Ibrāhīm Naṣīrī describes Zamān Khān Afghān and Ghāzī Khān Balūch as tribal leaders active in the Qandahar region; see Muḥammad Ibrāhīm ibn Zayn al-'Ābidīn Naṣīrī, *Dastūr-i shahryārān: Sālḥā-yi 1105 tā 1110 H. Q. pādshāhī-i Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn Ṣafawī*, ed. Muḥammad Nādir Naṣīrī Muqaddam (Tehran: Bunyād-i Mawqūfāt-i Duktur Maḥmūd Afshār, 1373 H.sh./1994), 120–21. Noelle-Karimi identifies the aforesaid Zamān Khān as Zamān Khān Abdālī, i.e., the father of Aḥmad Shāh Durrānī; see Noelle-Karimi, *The Pearl in Its Midst*, 74–75. If true, this indicates that Zamān Khān was a figure of influence in the Qandahar region in the period leading up to Gurgīn Khān's governorship. Moreover, Zamān Khān's association with Ghāzī Khān Balūch suggests the Abdālī may have participated in some capacity in the Balūchī insurgencies endemic on the eastern frontiers of Safavid Iran in the late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth centuries.

⁴⁹ The name appears twice in the SAA: firstly on fol. 52b as Alakōzay Lūtīzay and secondly on fol. 53b as Kūtīzay. Lūtīzay seems to be a mis-transcription of Kūtīzay, which is the name of a segment of the Alakōzay clan; see Adamec, *Historical and Political Gazetteer of Afghanistan*, 5:305. This view is supported by the fact that Sulṭān Muḥammad gives this individual's name as Kata Kūtīzay Alakōzay; see Sulṭān Muḥammad, *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī*, 67.

with Gurgīn Khān. It was agreed that Rustam Khān would hand his brother, Zamān Khān, over to the governor as a hostage in exchange for being recognized as the chief of the Abdālī ulūs.⁵⁰ Gurgīn Khān subsequently sent Zamān Khān to Kirman and his presence in the province during the chieftaincy of Rustam Khān is attested to in the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī*.⁵¹ As discussed further below, Sulṭān Muḥammad indicates that Zamān Khān remained in Kirman until after Gurgīn Khān's death in 1121/1709.

After agreeing to recognize Rustam Khān as chief, Gurgīn Khān sent him along with one of his detachments to quell a Balūchī rebellion. However, the campaign proved unsuccessful and the Sadōzay 'Aṭā and 'Izzat⁵² along with their ally, Mīr Ways Hōtakī, took advantage of this failed campaign to imply that Rustam Khān had conspired to ensure the defeat of the governor's forces. When Rustam Khān returned from the campaign, Gurgīn Khān had him imprisoned. He then ordered for 'Aṭā, 'Izzat and Mīr Ways to kill Rustam Khān. The cautious Mīr Ways was reluctant to slay the chief of another tribal confederacy; he pointed out that since he belonged to the Hōtak clan, whereas both 'Aṭā and 'Izzat, like Rustam, belonged to the Sadōzay clan, it would be more appropriate for those two individuals to take responsibility for carrying out this act (*irtikāb-i īn amr munāsib-i ḥāl-i īn dū nafar ast*). In this way, Mīr Ways extricated himself from this dilemma and could lay responsibility for Rustam Khān's death at the feet of 'Aṭā and 'Izzat. In the end, it was 'Aṭā Khān who killed Rustam Khān and ended his four-year tenure as chief of the Abdālī ulūs.⁵³

⁵⁰ See *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī*, fols. 52b–54a; Sulṭān Muḥammad, *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī*, 67. The SAA suggests that the king of Iran—at the time, Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn—confirmed Rustam Khān in this position.

⁵¹ *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī*, fol. 56b.

⁵² *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī*, fol. 54b. Note that these names are spelled Ghayrat Khān and 'Aṭāy Khān Sadōzay in MS Or. 1877. However, Ghayrat appears to be a mis-transcription for 'Izzat, the name of an individual described in the earlier and subsequent parts of the text. The spelling errors are likely due to the scribe misreading of diacritics in the otherwise similarly spelled names, 'Izzat and Ghayrat.

⁵³ *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī*, fols. 54b–55b.

The alliance formed by ‘Aṭā, ‘Izzat, and Mīr Ways against Dawlat Khān and his son Rustam Khān appears to have hinged on their mutual relationship to the Abdālī chief Ja‘far Khān, who is described in the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* as belonging to the Kāmraṇ Khēl lineage of the Sadōzay clan.⁵⁴ Whereas the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* refers to Ja‘far Khān only in passing, the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān* implies that he served as a leader of the Abdālī at some point after Ḥayāt Khān relocated to Multan. The details are sketchy but it appears, in fact, that both Ja‘far Khān and Dawlat Khān rivaled one another for the leadership of the Abdālī. This is the impression given by Leech who, based on information derived from local informants, notes that ‘Aṭā Khān was the nephew of Ja‘far Khān and agreed to have Rustam Khān killed in order to avenge his uncle’s death.⁵⁵ Leech’s statements confirm that Dawlat Khān was responsible for the death of Ja‘far Khān, which would explain why the latter’s nephew, ‘Aṭā, conspired with Gurgīn Khān against Dawlat Khān and his son Rustam Khān.⁵⁶

The *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* and *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī* also hint at Mīr Ways’s affiliation with Ja‘far Khān as a decisive factor underlying the alliance he formed with ‘Aṭā and ‘Izzat against Dawlat Khān and Rustam Khān. According to these sources, during his chieftaincy, Dawlat Khān defeated the Ghilzay at an unspecified battle and held Mīr Ways’s father, Ḥusayn Hōtakī, as a hostage at Shahr-i Ṣafā.⁵⁷ That Dawlat Khān considered Ḥusayn Hōtakī

⁵⁴ *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī*, fol. 56a. In other words, Ja‘far Khān was a direct descendent of the Abdālī leader Kāmraṇ Khān, who is described in §4.2.

⁵⁵ Leech, “An Account of the Early Abdalees,” 466; *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī*, fol. 56a. The clan affiliation of ‘Izzat is not specified, but it is possible that he, too, was a relative of Ja‘far Khān and, by extension, a Kāmraṇ Khēl Sadōzay.

⁵⁶ While the *TMA* notes that Ja‘far Khān died in 1106/1695, it does not mention his cause of death. See ‘Alī Muḥammad Khān, *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān*, fols. 33a–33b.

⁵⁷ *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī*, fols. 56a–56b; Sulṭān Muḥammad, *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī*, 70–71. Sulṭān Muḥammad notes that Dawlat Khān’s battle with the Ghilzay in which Mīr Ways’s father was brought to Shahr-i Ṣafā occurred in 915/1509–10. But this date is far too early and is likely a scribal-error. Muḥammad Khalīl suggests that Mīr Ways was originally from Qalāt-i Ghilzay, a locale a few miles east of Shahr-i Ṣafā; Muḥammad Khalīl, *Majma‘ al-*

dangerous enough to confine indicates that he was a figure of considerable influence locally. Following Ja‘far Khān’s death, presumably at the hands of Rustam Khān and/or his father Dawlat Khān, his wife, Durkhay, and daughter, Khānzāda, were left without inheritance (*bī wāris būdand*).⁵⁸ Durkhay thus decided to betroth Khānzāda to Ḥusayn’s son Mīr Ways. This marriage alliance appears to have been facilitated by the mutual antagonism of Durkhay and Mīr Ways towards the political rivals of their respective families, Dawlat Khān and Rustam Khān. It is said that during Rustam Khān’s tenure as chief, Durkhay supplied Mīr Ways with the old official letters and decrees (*arqām wa aḥkām-i sābiqa*) of Ja‘far Khān that fell into her possession so that he might take them to the Safavid court in Isfahan and secure the chieftaincy of the local Afghan population for the son of Mīr Ways and Khānzāda.⁵⁹ This suggests that Mīr Ways’s status as the son-in-law (*dāmād*) of Ja‘far Khān and, by extension,

tawārikh, 10. We may thus presume that Mīr Ways’s father was a native of Qalāt-i Ghilzay as well. With respect to Mīr Ways’s father, several works suggest he was the son of a certain Shāh ‘Ālam; see Leech, “An Account of the Early Ghiljaees,” 311; Ḥayāt Khān, *Ḥayāt-i Afghānī*, 257, 262–63; Farhang, *Afghānistān dar panj qarn-i akhīr*, 76. Sulṭān Muḥammad states that Mīr Ways’s father was, in fact, a figure by the name of Ḥusayn b. Malik Yārī b. Hōtak. This assertion is supported by the anonymous genealogy that is appended to MS Or. 1877, which notes that Mīr Ways was the son of Ḥusayn b. Malik Yār Hōtakī; *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī*, fol. 75a. ‘Abd al-Ra’uf Bēnawā expressed doubt over Sulṭān Muḥammad’s assertion, citing a lack of supporting evidence. Bēnawā instead argued that Mīr Ways was the son of Shāh ‘Ālam and that Ḥusayn b. Malik Yār was, in fact, a more distant ancestor of Mīr Ways; see Bēnawā, *Hōtakī-hā*, 4–5. However, Bēnawā’s primary source of information, *Ḥayāt-i Afghānī*, which was derived in part from the reports of Leech, is not a flawless source of Afghan history and ought not be treated as such. Incidentally, in his publication on the early Ghilzay, Leech points out that a group of his Ghilzay contemporaries alleged that Mīr Ways’s father was not named Shāh ‘Ālam but was only referred to as such due to some affiliation with the Shāh ‘Ālam Khēl segment of the Ghilzay tribal confederacy. Although Leech dismisses this assertion as an absurdity, it is not out of the question. See Leech, “An Account of the Early Ghiljaees,” 311–12.

⁵⁸ Sulṭān Muḥammad spells her name d.r.kh.ū; see Sulṭān Muḥammad, *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī*, 71. This may be a colloquial form of the female name Durkhānay.

⁵⁹ *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī*, fol. 56b. According to Sulṭān Muḥammad, Mīr Ways made his way to Isfahan to secure the chieftaincy of the Ghilzay Afghans for himself; see Sulṭān Muḥammad, *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī*, 71. Leech suggests he intended to secure the chieftaincy for his brother-in-law, presumably the brother of Khānzāda (perhaps the aforesaid ‘Izzat?); see Leech, “An Account of the Early Abdalees,” 466. The SAA’s version is equally plausible.

his affiliation with the Kāmṛān Khēl Sadōzay, helped cement his alliance with ‘Aṭā and ‘Izzat against Rustam Khān and was a decisive, if overlooked, factor behind his subsequent rise to political authority in Qandahar.

Following Rustam Khān b. Dawlat’s death, Gurgīn Khān granted ‘Aṭā, ‘Izzat, and Mīr Ways joint control over the Abdālī ulūs.⁶⁰ The governor subsequently ordered ‘Aṭā and ‘Izzat to relocate the Abdālī—presumably those formerly affiliated with Rustam Khān—closer to the city of Qandahar. Fearful of disobeying Gurgīn Khān’s orders, the Abdālī vacated their settlements in the Arghasān Valley and resettled in a place called ‘Alī-ābād, roughly three *farsakhs* east of Qandahar.⁶¹ Gurgīn Khān and Mīr Ways then coordinated an attack against the Abdālī, causing many of them to flee to Shōrābak and the surrounding mountains to the south of Qandahar. Gurgīn Khān also sent several captured Abdālī leaders as prisoners to Kirman, which was his seat of governance.⁶²

The accounts in the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* and *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī* complicate the Khudaka tradition of Abdālī history in several respects. A noteworthy example is the account of Zamān Khān b. Dawlat in the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān*, which suggests that he: accompanied Ḥayāt Khān during his migration to Multan in 1093/1682; joined his brother-in-law, ‘Abd Allāh b. Ḥayāt, when the latter went to Shahr-i Ṣafā after Ja‘far Khān’s death in 1106/1695; and served as ‘Abd Allāh’s deputy when the latter left Shahr-i Ṣafā for Multan in 1116/1704. But while Ḥayāt Khān’s presence in Multan is attested in multiple sources, only the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān* and later works based on it mention Zamān Khān’s

⁶⁰ Sulṭān Muḥammad, *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī*, 68–69.

⁶¹ According to Dihkhudā, one *farsakh*, which is a unit of distance, equates to approximately 3 miles or 10,000–12,000 meters; see Dihkhudā, *Lughat-nāma*, 10:15058.

⁶² Sulṭān Muḥammad, *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī*, 68–69, 97.

movements between Multan and Shahr-i Ṣafā alongside Khudaka chiefs.⁶³ By contrast, the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* and *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī* suggest that Zamān Khān was sent to Kirman during Gurgīn Khān's governorship and remained there until the latter's death in 1121/1709 (i.e., when he is alleged in the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i 'ālī-shān* to have been in Shahr-i Ṣafā!).⁶⁴ These sources do not specify the date of Zamān Khān's relocation to Kirman but it would have occurred after Gurgīn Khān assumed direct control of Qandahar in ca. 1116/1704. It is possible, indeed likely, that he was among the Abdālī chiefs captured and sent to Kirman in the aftermath of the above-mentioned attack coordinated by Gurgīn Khān and Mīr Ways.

The references in sources like the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* and *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī* to Zamān Khān's presence in Kirman seriously undermine the sketchy accounts in the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i 'ālī-shān* of Zamān Khān's travels between Multan and Shahr-i Ṣafā. The emphasis on Zamān Khān's dubious connection to Multan may have been part of a broader strategy of associating significant historical events involving the Abdālī in some way to the Khudakas of Multan. Zamān Khān was, after all, well known as the father of the monarch Aḥmad Shāh Durrānī and so there would have been incentive to associate such a historically prominent personality with the Khudakas of Multan. However, considering the dearth of evidence in the sources about Zamān Khān's residing in Multan, it appears that the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i 'ālī-shān*'s author invented this claim as a way to embellish the historical ties of the Durrānī royal family to the Khudakas of Multan.⁶⁵

⁶³ Among the primary sources that refer to Ḥayāt Khān's relocation to Multan are: Maḥdī Khān, *Jahāngushā-yi Nādirī*, 5; Muḥammad Khalīl, *Majma' al-tawārīkh*, 19; *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī*, fol. 51b; Sulṭān Muḥammad, *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī*, 65–66; Nādir, *Zubdat al-akḥbār*, 21. It is telling that none of these works refer to Zamān Khān's presence in Multan.

⁶⁴ Sulṭān Muḥammad, *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī*, 72. The SAA concludes with the statement that Zamān Khān was in Kirman at the time of Rustam Khān's death. *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī*, fol. 56b.

⁶⁵ The similarly problematic claim that Aḥmad Shāh Durrānī was born in Multan is treated in §6.1.

Beyond such chronological problems, the Khudaka-centricity of the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān*’s narrative obfuscates the fact that multiple families claimed the leadership of the Abdālī *ulūs* at different points in time. To briefly summarize the sequence of events detailed in Chapter 4, the earliest attested Abdālī leaders are the brothers Mawdūd and Kāmṛān, who served as margraves in the Qandahar region during the governorship of the Safavid official ‘Alī Mardān Khān and who convinced the latter to cede control of the province to the Mughals in 1638. With Mughal backing, Mawdūd’s son Shāh Ḥusayn succeeded him as chief of the Abdālī. But when the Safavids invaded Qandahar in 1648, many Abdālī, apparently with the blessing of the new Safavid regime, threw their support behind Khudādād Sulṭān, a son of the obscure figure Khwāja Khiṣr who is described as a brother of Mawdūd and Kāmṛān. A rivalry developed between the Safavid-backed Khudādād b. Khwāja Khiṣr and the Mughal-backed Shāh Ḥusayn b. Mawdūd, thus creating a fissure in the ranks of the Abdālī leadership. Over time Khudādād and his son Ḥayāt Khān seem to have had a falling out with the Safavids that cost Khudādād his life. Soon thereafter, Ḥayāt Khān relocated to Multan and the confederacy’s leadership devolved upon Ja‘far Khān, a descendent of the aforesaid Kāmṛān. The *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* and *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī* indicate that leadership later devolved on Dawlat Khān, the grandfather of Aḥmad Shāh Durrānī, and the latter’s son Rustam Khān; like Khudādād, Dawlat and Rustam belonged to the Khwāja Khiṣr Khēl branch of Abdālī, albeit through a collateral line.

This analysis indicates that the leadership of the Abdālī *ulūs* was neither hereditary nor restricted to a particular descent group. Rather, a kinship network of chiefs who claimed, or are alleged in later sources to have claimed, descent from a common ancestor

named Sadō collectively formed the *khān khēl* of the Abdālī confederacy.⁶⁶ While descent from Sadō, is represented in the Abdālī genealogical histories as a necessary criterion for chieftaincy, state patronage played an equal, if not greater role in the selection of a chief. Governors representing the Safavid and Mughal states would select chiefs to rule over the local population. The formation of a new ruling regime was usually accompanied by the selection of a chief with whom the incoming governor would forge an alliance. Sexual politics also played a role in the selection of a chief; governors would often try to establish marriage ties with a chief of influence, thus solidifying ties between the leaders of powerful tribes and the state.⁶⁷ This relationship was symbiotic. From the state's perspective, the chiefs would provide security by protecting the trade routes and ensuring the subservience of the subject population. This would assure the steady flow of revenue into the treasury and allow for trade to flourish, a process through which both the governor and chiefs would enrich themselves. A common method of guarding against an insubordinate chief was to appoint a more compliant relative in his place. The removal of the old chiefs from power was often a source of tension: the outgoing chiefs would attempt to assert autonomy by rebelling; if not killed, they would be forced into exile and or seek support of a rival state. The high turnover of chiefs would explain why chieftaincy did not reside with a particular family and allow it to evolve into a dynasty, despite the idealistic representation in the

⁶⁶ There is no evidence that the ideology of common descent from Sadō was present among the chiefs of the Abdālī *ulūs* in the pre-Durrānī period. This ideology only attained clear expression in works written in the Durrānī period.

⁶⁷ The SAA's account of the Safavid *bēglarbēg* seeking to establish marriage ties with Ḥayāt Khān is but one example. For a later example, see the discussion below of the marriage alliance established by Gurgīn Khān's commander Mīrzā Qāsim with the local Afghan chief 'Ālam Shāh. For an earlier example of a Safavid governor of Qandahar Jamshīd Khān seeking to establish a marriage alliance with a Baluchi chieftain, see Matthee, *Persia in Crisis*, 161–62.

Abdālī genealogical histories. This system of checks and balances was inherently unstable and contributed to the political unrest that gripped Qandahar in the late Safavid period.

A final point is worth noting: as Abdālī genealogical histories like the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān* and *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* were written in Sadōzay milieus, they not unpredictably tend to depict the Sadōzay chiefs of the Abdālī tribal confederacy as the natural ruling class. But a close reading of contemporary primary sources reveals that the Abdālī were merely one of several local actors—be they chiefs of other Afghan tribes, or those of non-Afghan tribes like the Hazara, Baluch, Brahōy, and others—vying for influence in the region in the pre-Durrānī period.⁶⁸ Of the various political actors, the Abdālī-Durrānī rose to political power and so it is their history that predominates, whereas the history of other important groups and leaders is often overlooked. In this way, the Abdālī genealogical histories exemplify the truism that history is written by the victors and, in effect, they represent the efforts of the Sadōzay, and the authors they either patronized or received the tacit support of, to give order to what was a far more complex, even chaotic, period in the history of Qandahar and surrounding lands.

5.3: The Collapse of Safavid Rule in Qandahar and the Ghilzay Takeover

The *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* and *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī* indicate that during his decade-long governorship (1110–21/1699–1709), Gurgīn Khān successfully broke the power of the former Abdālī leadership, forced its leaders to relocate to the mountainous enclaves southeast of Qandahar, and sent many of its chiefs to his base of power in Kirman. One of the benefactors of Gurgīn Khān’s policies was Mīr Ways who, thanks in large part to his close affiliation with

⁶⁸ This sentiment is expressed in Noelle-Karimi, *The Pearl in Its Midst*, 74–75.

the Hōtakī and Sadōzay leadership, was able to secure an official post in Qandahar.⁶⁹ During the governorship of Gurgīn Khān, Mīr Ways served as the overseer of the local caravan trade (*qāfila-sālārī*) and, in this capacity, the Ghilzay chieftain was charged with ensuring the safety of merchant caravans passing between Iran and India.⁷⁰ Mīr Ways's growing political clout was likely tied to the wealth he accumulated through his close involvement in local trade. The Ghilzay tribal confederacy to which he belonged had, in the early-modern period, been prominent members of the network of nomadic tribal traders (also known as *pawindas*) active along trade routes linking the markets of Qandahar, Kabul and Peshawar.⁷¹

Although he was apparently on good terms with Gurgīn Khān initially, a number of factors contributed to Mīr Ways's falling out with the Safavid governor. Several sources attribute the strained relations between Mīr Ways and Gurgīn Khān to the oppressive rule of the governor who is accused, along with his Georgian soldiery, of raising taxes, extortion, and sexual transgressions.⁷² An oft-overlooked turning point in relations seems to have been when the post of *qāfila-sālār* was taken away from Mīr Ways and awarded to a certain 'Ālam Shāh Afghān.⁷³ In 1118/1706, shortly after 'Ālam Shāh's appointment, Mīr Ways went to the

⁶⁹ Mīr Ways's connection to the Sadōzay clan may explain why Khātūnābādī refers to him as an Abdālī, though it is possible this label Abdālī was applied to Mīr Ways in error; see 'Abd al-Ḥusayn Khātūnābādī, *Waqāyī' al-sinīn wa al-a'wām*, ed. Muḥammad Bāqir Bihbūdī (Tehran: Kitābfurūshī-i Islāmiyya, 1352 H.sh./1973), 558–59.

⁷⁰ See Mu'min Kirmānī, *Ṣaḥīfat al-irshād*, 361–62. Though we know that Mīr Ways did hold the post of *qāfila-sālārī* during the governorship of Gurgīn Khān, the exact date of his appointment to this office is not specified in the sources. It is worth noting that Hanway also describes Mīr Ways alternatively as having held the post of *kalāntar* or “prefect”; see Hanway, *An Historical Account of the British Trade over the Caspian Sea*, 2:102.

⁷¹ For a useful description of the *pawinda* phenomenon, see Hanifi, *Connecting Histories in Afghanistan*, 39–46.

⁷² See, e.g., Hanway, *An Historical Account of the British Trade over the Caspian Sea*, 2:102.

⁷³ According to Kirmānī, one of Gurgīn Khān's commanders, Mīrzā Qāsim, formed a marriage alliance with 'Ālam Shāh and the latter was subsequently appointed to Mīr Ways's post, i.e. *qāfila-sālār*. See Mu'min Kirmānī, *Ṣaḥīfat al-irshād*, 361–62; see also Matthee, *Persia in Crisis*, 233. This 'Ālam Shāh may be identical to Shāh 'Ālam, a contemporary of Mīr Ways's who belonged to the rival Tōkhī clan of the Ghilzay confederacy. For a description

Safavid court to complain about Gurgīn Khān.⁷⁴ While the sources disagree on the specifics of Mīr Ways's trip to the royal court, they agree that while there the weaknesses plaguing the Safavid state became evident to him and he began to contemplate openly rebelling against Gurgīn Khān.⁷⁵ After lodging his complaint against the governor, Mīr Ways secured permission from Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn (r. 1105–35/1694–1722) to make the pilgrimage to Mecca and returned to Qandahar at the beginning of Dhū al-Qaʿda 1120/January 1709 with the honorific title of *ḥājjī* (i.e., “Pilgrim”). On his return, Mīr Ways feigned deference to Gurgīn Khān but covertly plotted against him in unison with local Afghan malcontents.⁷⁶

In the summer of 1709,⁷⁷ Gurgīn Khān made his way to Dih-i Shaykh in the Arghasān Valley where he set up camp and dispatched his senior commanders to subdue rebellious

of the rivalry between the chiefs of the Hōtakī and Tōkhī clans of the Ghilzay tribal confederacy in the eighteenth century, see Leech, “An Account of the Early Ghiljaes,” 315–16.

⁷⁴ The scholarly consensus is that Mīr Ways went to Isfahan. But Kirmānī suggests that he met up with the itinerant court of Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn at Simnān at the end of Rajab 1118/October–November 1706 while the ruler was on his way to visit the shrine of Imām Riḏā in Mashhad. Wārid agrees that Mīr Ways joined the Safavid court at Mashhad; see Muʾmin Kirmānī, *Ṣaḥīfat al-irshād*, 362; Wārid, *Mirʾāt-i wāridāt*, 109–10. Interestingly, Sulṭān Muḥammad notes explicitly that Mīr Ways went to the Safavid court on multiple occasions. As noted earlier in this chapter, he appears to have gone to Isfahan to secure the chieftaincy of the Ghilzay tribe. When he was replaced as *qāfila-sālār* and entered into conflict with Gurgīn Khān, he again went to Safavid court (this time without specifying its location) to complain about the governor. Sulṭān Muḥammad, *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī*, 71–72. We may thus presume that Mīr Ways visited the Safavid court on multiple separate occasions.

⁷⁵ Kirmānī suggests that while at the Safavid court, Mīr Ways became aware of the difficulty the Safavid army was having in dealing with Turkmen raids in northern Iran. It was at this point that Mīr Ways realized that if he incited a rebellion in Qandahar, the bulk of the Safavid military would be too preoccupied to deal with such a rebellion on the empire's southeastern frontier; see Muʾmin Kirmānī, *Ṣaḥīfat al-irshād*, 363–64.

⁷⁶ Muʾmin Kirmānī, *Ṣaḥīfat al-irshād*, 365–67.

⁷⁷ The scholarly consensus, based on the writing of Sekhnia Chkheidze, is that this event took place on 21 April 1709; see Brosset, *Histoire de la Géorgie*, 2/ii:29; Lockhart, *The Fall of the Ṣafavī Dynasty*, 87–88; Matthee, *Persia in Crisis*, 234, 324n230. Whereas Sulṭān Muḥammad also indicates that it took place in Ṣafar 1121/April 1709, ʿAlī Muḥammad Khān gives the alternate date of 1120/1708–9; see Sulṭān Muḥammad, *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī*, 72; ʿAlī Muḥammad Khān, *Taḏkirat al-mulūk-i ʿālī-shān*, fol. 35b. Kirmānī's statement that Gurgīn Khān made his way to Arghasān in the summer due to the valley's temperate climate implies that his death occurred after April.

Afghan tribes in and around Qandahar.⁷⁸ Mīr Ways and his supporters took advantage of Gurgīn Khān's vulnerability by attacking and killing him and his bodyguards.⁷⁹ Mīr Ways then proceeded to capture the citadel of Qandahar.⁸⁰ When news of Gurgīn Khān's death reached his commanders who had been campaigning on the outskirts of Qandahar, they made their way to the citadel to do battle with Mīr Ways's forces. However, the Ghilzay chief successfully repelled this attack and was able to consolidate his position in Qandahar.⁸¹

A group of Abdālī may have leant support to Mīr Ways against Gurgīn Khān. The Georgian chronicler Wakhusht suggests that the Abdālī who had been guarding Gurgīn Khān

⁷⁸ Mahdī Khān, *Jahāngushā-yi Nādirī*, 5; Muḥammad Khalīl, *Majmaʿ al-tawārīkh*, 6–7; Sulṭān Muḥammad, *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī*, 72; Muḥammad ʿAlī Ḥazīn Lāhījī, *The Life of Sheikh Mohammed Ali Hazin, Written by Himself: Edited from Two Persian Manuscripts, and Noted with Their Various Readings*, ed. F. C. Belfour (London, 1831), 105. Ḥazīn Lāhījī refers to Dih-i Shaykh as a “hunting ground” (*shikār-gāh*) in the Arghasān valley. Mahdī Khān, followed by both Muḥammad Khalīl and Sulṭān Muḥammad, suggests that Gurgīn Khān made his way from Qandahar to Dih-i Shaykh specifically to punish Kākar rebels. But as Kirmānī indicates, the governor dispatched commanders in several directions in order to punish those tribesmen whom Mīr Ways incited into rebellion; see Muʾmin Kirmānī, *Ṣaḥīfat al-irshād*, 369–73.

⁷⁹ The sources give conflicting accounts of how Gurgīn Khān met his end. According to a local tradition, an Afghan named Murād Khān was responsible for Gurgīn Khān's death; see Mahdī Khān, *Jahāngushā-yi Nādirī*, 5; Muḥammad Khalīl, *Majmaʿ al-tawārīkh*, 6. Leech gives a similar account of the death of Shāh Nawāz (i.e., Gurgīn Khān), which appears to be based in part on local informants; see Leech, “An Account of the Early Ghiljaees,” 312. Lockhart views the account of Murād Khān murdering Gurgīn Khān as “clearly incorrect,” but offers no compelling reason for his skepticism; Lockhart, *The Fall of the Ṣafavī Dynasty*, 87n2.

⁸⁰ The accounts of the authors of the various primary sources written on the conflict between Mīr Way and Gurgīn Khān—namely, Judas Krusinski, Joseph Abisalamian, Sekhnia Chkheidze, Wakhusht, Muḥammad Khalīl, Mustawfī, and Sulṭān Muḥammad—have been discussed in Noelle-Karimi, *The Pearl in Its Midst*, 84–86n300, and thus need not be repeated here. A detailed account of events is also given in Muʾmin Kirmānī, *Ṣaḥīfat al-irshād*, 368–79; Hanway, *An Historical Account of the British Trade over the Caspian Sea*, 2:101–7, 2:113–14; Awrangābādī, *The Maʿāsir al-umarāʾ*, ed. ʿAbd al-Raḥīm and Ashraf ʿAlī, 3:701–4. For studies that describe the altercation between Mīr Ways and Gurgīn Khān, see Lockhart, *Nadir Shah*, 2–3; Lockhart, *The Fall of the Ṣafavī Dynasty*, 84–86; Matthee, *Persia in Crisis*, 233–35.

⁸¹ Muʾmin Kirmānī, *Ṣaḥīfat al-irshād*, 381–85; Hanway, *An Historical Account of the British Trade over the Caspian Sea*, 2:115; Muḥammad Khalīl, *Majmaʿ al-tawārīkh*, 7–8; Wārid indicates that Maṣṣūr Khān Shāhsiwan was among the Safavid commanders who fought Mīr Ways in Qandahar after Gurgīn Khān's death. Wārid, *Mirʿāt-i wāridāt*, 115–16. This appears to be the same Maṣṣūr Khān mentioned earlier in the *Ṣaḥīfat al-irshād* (p. 372) as being sent by Gurgīn Khān to quell Afghan rebellions east of Qandahar. Maṣṣūr Khān Shāhsiwan later battled the Abdālī in Khurasan.

were tricked into abandoning their post and their absence enabled Mīr Ways to have the governor killed.⁸² According to Leech's account, the Abdālī aided Mīr Ways against Gurgīn Khān on the condition that he shared with them the booty confiscated from the Safavid forces. When the Abdālī realized they had been deceived, they fought Mīr Ways's forces at Dasht-i Bōrī to the northeast of Qandahar. In this battle, the Abdālī, apparently led by Asad Allāh b. ʿAbd Allāh, were routed and retreated to Herat.⁸³

A similar account is given in the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ʿālī-shān* according to which, prior to capturing the citadel of Qandahar, Mīr Ways petitioned Ḥayāt Khān to help him overthrow Gurgīn Khān. In exchange for his support, Mīr Ways agreed to allow Ḥayāt Khān to rule from Qandahar and divide the lands outside the citadel between the Abdālī and Ghilzay. Ḥayāt Khān agreed and sent his son, ʿAbd Allāh, and grandson, Asad Allāh, to Shahr-i Ṣafā.⁸⁴ When Gurgīn Khān was killed, ʿAbd Allāh and Asad Allāh proceeded to help the Ghilzay lay siege to Qandahar. At this time, the besiegers caught wind of the coming of a Safavid force to relieve Qandahar. ʿAbd Allāh volunteered to repel this force and subsequently met and defeated it near Farāh. Mīr Ways assumed control of Qandahar while ʿAbd Allāh was away. But when the latter returned to Qandahar, Mīr Ways locked the gates

⁸² For his account of Gurgīn Khān's death, see Brosset, *Histoire de la Géorgie*, 2/i:102; Lockhart, *The Fall of the Ṣafavī Dynasty*, 87n3; Noelle-Karimi, *The Pearl in Its Midst*, 85n.

⁸³ Leech, "An Account of the Early Abdalees," 467. N.b., the "Algabad" found in Leech's publication seems to be a misspelling of ʿAlī-ābād. Leech's account of this conflict between the Abdālī and Ghilzay continues where the British Library manuscript of the SAA abruptly ends. It is likely that this account was recorded in the manuscript of the SAA he consulted.

⁸⁴ Kamal Khan adds that because Ḥayāt Khān failed to support Prince Muʿazzam in the succession dispute after Awrangzīb's death in 1119/1707, he lost his pension from the Mughals. He later sent his sons to Shahr-i Ṣafā and took control of the town from Zamān Khān. See Kamal Khan, *Rise of Saddozais*, 117–18.

of the citadel and said they would only be opened for Ḥayāt Khān, as per the conditions of their agreement. On realizing he had been duped, ‘Abd Allāh returned to Shahr-i Ṣafā.⁸⁵

It is difficult to assess the veracity of the accounts found in the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* and the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān*. Both are clearly aimed at allotting the Abdālī a significant role in the overthrow of Gurgīn Khān while also disparaging Mīr Ways by making him out to be a cunning oath-breaker. In the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān*, ‘Alī Muhammad Khān’s assertion that ‘Abd Allāh b. Ḥayāt Khān went to Shahr-i Ṣafā after Mīr Ways locked him out of Qandahar is problematic since it implies that the Khudakas maintained their presence in Shahr-i Ṣafā long after Ḥayāt Khān moved to Multan. The author even suggests that the Khudakas remained at Shahr-i Ṣafā until 1132/1719. But much of the available evidence contradicts these assertions. For instance, contemporary sources indicate that ‘Abd Allāh and his son Asad Allāh made their way from Multan to Farāh and Herat to support Safavid attempts to re-take Qandahar and they provide no evidence of their continued presence in Shahr-i Ṣafā.⁸⁶ Moreover, Shahr-i Ṣafā is located between Qandahar and Qalāt (also known as Qalāt-i Ghilzay)—both of which were important Ghilzay strongholds—and it is doubtful that the Abdālī would have been able to maintain control of the stronghold for a decade after Mīr Ways and his supporters assumed control of Qandahar.⁸⁷ In light of these inconsistencies, the tradition of the Khudakas aiding Mīr Ways in overthrowing Gurgīn Khān should be approached with skepticism.

⁸⁵ ‘Alī Muḥammad Khān, *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān*, fols. 34a–36b.

⁸⁶ Muḥammad Khalīl, *Majma‘ al-tawārīkh*, 19–20; Sulṭān Muḥammad, *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī*, 97–98. It will be remembered that ‘Alī Muhammad Khān also suggests that Zamān Khān was in Shahr-i Ṣafā at the time when both the SAA and TSu indicate that he was sent, along with other Abdālī leaders, to Kirman.

⁸⁷ The TMA asserts that the Khudakas and their deputies remained in control of Shahr-i Ṣafā and the Arghasān Valley until Maḥmūd b. Mīr Ways evicted them in 1132/1719. See ‘Alī Muḥammad Khān, *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān*, fols. 39b–41a.

Notwithstanding the questionable assertion in both the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* and the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān* with respect to ‘Abd Allāh b. Ḥayāt’s participating in the Ghilzay-led rebellion in Qandahar, the notion that the Abdālī cooperated with Mīr Ways against Gurgīn Khān is not far-fetched. As noted earlier, leaders of the Kāmṛān Khēl segment allied with Mīr Ways and Gurgīn Khān against Dawlat Khān and Rustam Khān and may also have allied with Mīr Ways against Gurgīn Khān. Although conjectural, this view would explain why Wakhusht mentions the Abdālī as guarding Gurgīn Khān prior to his death.⁸⁸

While it is unclear what role, if any, the Abdālī played in the Afghan revolt of 1120–21/1709, what is certain is that the Ghilzay became the dominant tribal faction in Qandahar following the death of Gurgīn Khān. The Abdālī, on the other hand, supported several subsequent commanders sent by the Safavid monarchs to retake Qandahar. More specifically, when news of Gurgīn Khān’s death reached the Safavid court, Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn sent the late governor’s nephew Kay Khusraw b. Liwan Mīrzā to punish Mīr Ways and re-conquer Qandahar.⁸⁹ A large Safavid army gathered in Farāh in Rabī‘ I 1122/April–May 1710.⁹⁰ Mahdī Khān, Sulṭān Muḥammad, and Muḥammad Khalīl indicate that, around this time, ‘Abd Allāh and his son Asad Allāh arrived from Multan and joined Kay Khusraw on his march against the Ghilzay of Qandahar.⁹¹ Sulṭān Muḥammad adds that Zamān Khān

⁸⁸ Brosset, *Histoire de la Géorgie*, 2/i:102.

⁸⁹ Mu’min Kirmānī, *Ṣaḥīfat al-irshād*, 385–89.

⁹⁰ Mu’min Kirmānī, *Ṣaḥīfat al-irshād*, 391–92.

⁹¹ Mahdī Khān, *Jahāngushā-yi Nādirī*, 5–6; Muḥammad Khalīl, *Majma‘ al-tawārīkh*, 19–20. According to the TMA, Kay Khusraw sent representatives to ‘Abd Allāh at Shahr-i Ṣafā and agreed to allow the latter to rule Qandahar once the citadel was recaptured and Mīr Ways killed; ‘Alī Muḥammad Khān, *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān*, fols. 36a–36b. But Muḥammad Khalīl suggests ‘Abd Allāh arrived from Multan with his son Asad Allāh and 500–600 fighters to aid Kay Khusraw. Moreover, there is no reliable evidence that Kay Khusraw agreed to grant ‘Abd Allāh control over Qandahar.

arrived from Kirman and was also among the Abdālī leaders who joined Kay Khusraw during this campaign.⁹²

From Farāh, Kay Khusraw entered the region of Zamīndāwar and made his way to the Hīrmand or Helmand River; but there appears to have been a delay at this juncture. Muḥammad Khalīl indicates that on learning of Kay Khusraw's advance, Mīr Ways and his forces set up camp at the Helmand and prevented Kay Khusraw's army from crossing.⁹³ He also led a detachment against several thousand Abdālī fighters making their way to join Kay Khusraw's army. This Abdālī contingent was crushed in a night attack and dispersed and many of its leaders killed.⁹⁴

The activities of Mīr Ways and his men seem to have impeded the progress of the Safavid army, for some sources indicate that Kay Khusraw did not resume his march on Qandahar until the summer of 1123/1711.⁹⁵ Upon reaching the city's outskirts he set up camp and many local Afghan chiefs, including all the leaders of the Abdālī confederacy (*tamāmī-i sar-khēlān wa ru'asā-yi ṭāyifa-i Afāghina-i Abdālī*) appeared before him to offer gifts as

⁹² Sulṭān Muḥammad, *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī*, 72, 97–98. Mu'min Kirmānī indicates that many thousand troops from Kirman were dispatched to aid Kay Khusraw; see Mu'min Kirmānī, *Ṣaḥīfat al-irshād*, 389–93.

⁹³ Hanway indicates that Mīr Ways's army augmented by many Balūchī and Tarīnī Afghan fighters during his altercation with Kay Khusraw; see Hanway, *An Historical Account of the British Trade over the Caspian Sea*, 2:118–19.

⁹⁴ Muḥammad Khalīl, *Majma' al-tawārīkh*, 8–9. Wakhusht states that Mīr Ways personally led a detachment that attacked and defeated 4,000 Abdālī soldiers on their way to aid Kay Khusraw; see Brosset, *Histoire de la Géorgie*, 2/i:106.

⁹⁵ According to Muḥammad Khalīl, Kay Khusraw continued the march when informants notified him that Mīr Ways was preoccupied with the Abdālī and left Qandahar vulnerable to attack. Muḥammad Khalīl, *Majma' al-tawārīkh*, 9; Lockhart, *The Fall of the Ṣafavī Dynasty*, 89. According to Kirmānī, however, Kay Khusraw's army crossed the Helmand River in Jumādā II 1122/August 1710, set up camp there, and sent a detachment to gather information about the state of affairs in Qandahar. It was upon receiving this intelligence that Kay Khusraw continued his march on Qandahar; Mu'min Kirmānī, *Ṣaḥīfat al-irshād*, 391–95.

tokens of their submission.⁹⁶ Kay Khusraw proceeded to surround and blockade the citadel of Qandahar. A number of skirmishes and indecisive battles broke out between the Safavid forces and those of Mīr Ways. During the lengthy siege, Mīr Ways is said to have sued for peace on several occasions but Kay Khusraw stubbornly rejected these overtures.⁹⁷ In the end Kay Khusraw's desire to avenge his uncle, Gurgīn Khān's, death by killing Mīr Ways proved to be his undoing for he was shot and killed late in 1123/1711 in a battle outside the citadel.⁹⁸ When news of Kay Khusraw's death reached Qandahar, Mīr Ways's forces attacked troops outside the citadel, capturing some and forcing the remaining to retreat.⁹⁹

⁹⁶ Mu'min Kirmānī, *Ṣaḥīfat al-irshād*, 398–99. According to Kirmānī, Kay Khusraw set up camp in the vicinity of the citadel of Tīt (?); for more on this location, see the editor's note on p. 399.

⁹⁷ Mu'min Kirmānī, *Ṣaḥīfat al-irshād*, 402–7; Hanway, *An Historical Account of the British Trade over the Caspian Sea*, 2:118.

⁹⁸ The dating of Kay Khusraw's campaign against Qandahar differs according to the source consulted. Kirmānī suggests Kay Khusraw entered Qandahar in the summer of 1122/1710, roughly a year after Gurgīn Khān's death, and that Kay Khusraw was killed in Shawwāl/December of the same year; see Mu'min Kirmānī, *Ṣaḥīfat al-irshād*, 408, 412–13. Mahdī Khān and Mustawfī both suggest Kay Khusraw arrived in Qandahar in 1123/1711 and was killed in the same year, with Mahdī Khān giving the precise date of 26 Ramaḍān 1123/7 November 1711; Mahdī Khān, *Jahāngushā-yi Nādirī*, 5; Mustawfī, *Zubdat al-tawārīkh*, 116–17, 168. On the other hand, Muḥammad Khalīl claims Kay Khusraw's death took place at an unspecified point in 1124/1712–13, though this date is too late; Muḥammad Khalīl, *Majma' al-tawārīkh*, 17. Sulṭān Muḥammad and 'Alī Muḥammad Khān indicate that the Safavid army besieged Qandahar for an entire year before Kay Khusraw was killed; see Sulṭān Muḥammad, *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī*, 72; 'Alī Muḥammad Khān, *Tazkīrat al-mulūk-i 'ālī-shān*, fol. 36a. Hanway indicates that Kay Khusraw arrived in Khurasan in November of 1710 and, after some delays, then proceeded to Qandahar; see Hanway, *An Historical Account of the British Trade over the Caspian Sea*, 2:117–18. Based on this information, one may infer that Kay Khusraw's forces entered Qandahar in 1122, as Kirmānī suggests, and besieged Qandahar for a full year before he was killed in the winter of 1123/1711. This chronology of events is supported by the chronicle of Wakhshūt, according to which Kay Khusraw began his campaign in 1710 and was killed in Qandahar on October 26, 1711; see Brosset, *Histoire de la Géorgie*, 2/i:104–8; also see *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. "Kay-Ḳosrow Khan" (by Hirotake Maeda). It is worth noting that Kirmānī's chronicle contains many lacunae and does not include an account of events for the year 1123/1711–12. It is entirely possible that the events it places in 1122 actually occurred in 1123.

⁹⁹ Mu'min Kirmānī, *Ṣaḥīfat al-irshād*, 408–12. There are different versions as to how Kay Khusraw met his end. Certain authors suggest he was killed when Mīr Ways's army attacked his troops as they were retreating from Qandahar; see Mahdī Khān, *Jahāngushā-yi Nādirī*, 5; Mustawfī, *Zubdat al-tawārīkh*, 117, 169; Muḥammad Khalīl, *Majma' al-tawārīkh*, 17. But Kirmānī and Sulṭān Muḥammad agree that Kay Khusraw was killed when a bullet

Although there were subsequent attempts to retake Qandahar, the Safavid state was in disarray, and the defeat of Kay Khusraw proved to be decisive. Mīr Ways became the de-facto ruler over the lands between Qandahar and Farāh. During his time in power, Mīr Ways acknowledged the Mughal rulers Bahādur Shāh I (r. 1119–24/1707–12) and Farrukh Siyar (r. 1124–31/1713–19) and sent cash tribute to the Mughal court. In return, he was recognized as the ruler of Qandahar.¹⁰⁰ When Mīr Ways died in ca. 1127/1715, he was succeeded by his brother ‘Abd al-‘Azīz.¹⁰¹ But Mīr Ways’s son Mīr Maḥmūd had ‘Abd al-‘Azīz killed and succeeded the latter as ruler of Qandahar in 1129/1717.¹⁰² Mīr Maḥmūd b. Mīr Ways (d. 1136/1724) would go on to capture Isfahan in 1135/1722 and rule from there as Shāh until he was, in turn, killed and replaced by his cousin Ashraf b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz (r. 1136–42/1724–29). The latter reigned until 1142/1729, when the Iranian ruler Nādir Afshār, the future Nādir Shāh, expelled him from Isfahan. Mīr Maḥmūd’s brother Mīr Ḥusayn ruled from Qandahar

struck him. It was only after he was killed that Mīr Ways’s men attacked the retreating Safavid army; see Muḥmin Kirmānī, *Ṣaḥīfat al-irshād*, 410–11; Sulṭān Muḥammad, *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī*, 72.

¹⁰⁰ Muḥammad Khalīl, *Majma‘ al-tawārīkh*, 18; Wārid, *Mir‘āt-i wāridāt*, 115–16; Muḥammad Hādī Kāmwar Khān, *Tazkirat al-salāṭīn-i Chaghatā: Tazkira-i jānīshīnān-i Awrangzīb*, ed. Muzaffar Alam (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1980), 121, 124–25, 198, 203.

¹⁰¹ Muḥammad Khalīl notes that Mīr Ways died either late in 1128 or early in 1129, i.e. 1715; see Muḥammad Khalīl, *Majma‘ al-tawārīkh*, 18. Mustawfī suggests he died in 1129/1717, but this date is too late; see Mustawfī, *Zubdat al-tawārīkh*, 169. Sulṭān Muḥammad suggests that Mīr Ways ruled for eight years, which would place his death in 1128 (1121–28/1709–15); Sulṭān Muḥammad, *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī*, 72–73. Bēnawā gives the date of 28 Dhū al-Ḥijja 1127/25 December 1715; Bēnawā, *Hōtakī-hā*, 73. The date of 1715, which corresponds to either 1127 or early 1128 Hijrī-qamarī, is corroborated by the archival documents of the *Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie* or Dutch East Indies Company (henceforth VOC); see Willem Floor, comp. and trans., *The Afghan Invasion of Safavid Persia, 1721–1729* (Paris: Association pour l’Avancement des Études Iraniennes, 1998), 39.

¹⁰² Kāmwar Khān, *Tazkirat al-salāṭīn-i Chaghatā*, 211, 224; Mahdī Khān, *Jahāngushā-yi Nādirī*, 5; Muḥammad Khalīl, *Majma‘ al-tawārīkh*, 18; Sulṭān Muḥammad, *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī*, 73, Bēnawā, *Hōtakī-hā*, 76–78.

from the time of the Ghilzay invasion of Isfahan until the Nādirid conquest of the province in 1150/1738, which brought an end to the transient Ghilzay dynasty.¹⁰³

5.4: The Collapse of Safavid Rule in Herat and the Abdālī Takeover

The Establishment of Abdālī Rule in Herat

Several decades of internal crises within the Safavid realm culminated in the Ghilzay and Abdālī Afghans gradually overrunning the eastern provinces of the empire, Qandahar and Herat.¹⁰⁴ But if the history of the Ghilzay dynasty remains poorly understood, even less is known about the establishment of Abdālī rule in Herat despite its significance in presaging the formation of Abdālī-Durrānī rule under Aḥmad Shāh a few decades later.

Among the few sources to treat this dark period of Abdālī history in some detail is the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān*, which continues its narrative by describing the Abdālī invasion of Herat that occurred after the failed Safavid conquest of Qandahar in 1123/1711. According to ‘Alī Muḥammad Khān, following Kay Khusraw’s death, ‘Abd Allāh returned to his base (*bi jā-yi kh^wīsh*), i.e., Shahr-i Ṣafā, and made preparations to invade Herat. He sent his son Asad Allāh and a body of Abdālī troops to Herat. On reaching the outskirts of the city, Asad Allāh and his forces battled and defeated Ḥusayn Wirdī Khān, who is described as the Safavid military commander (*sardār*) of Khurasan. Asad Allāh sent news of this victory to his father ‘Abd Allāh, who proceeded to Herat. Meanwhile Asad Allāh’s army besieged the city,

¹⁰³ For studies surveying the period of Ghilzay rule in Qandahar (1121–50/1709–38) and Isfahan (1135–42/1722–29), in addition to Bēnawā’s *Hōtakī-hā*, also see Farhang, *Afghānistān dar panj qarn-i akhīr*, 73–111. The efforts of these authors notwithstanding, the period of Ghilzay rule is an important if neglected chapter in the history of Iran and Indo-Khurasan. While beyond the scope of the present project, the rule of the Afghans in post-Safavid Iran is deserving of a fresh appraisal, especially in light of the many new sources published on this topic in recent decades.

¹⁰⁴ For a more recent assessment of the crises plaguing the Safavid state in its final decades, see especially Matthee, *Persia in Crisis*, xxi–xxx, 197–241.

which surrendered on 15 Ramaḍān 1124/16 October 1712. When ‘Abd Allāh joined his son in Herat, he assumed the regal title of Shāh and minted coins (*sikka*) and had the Friday *khuṭba* read in the name of his father in Multan, Ḥayāt Khān.¹⁰⁵

There are a number of problems with ‘Alī Muḥammad Khān’s account of events. A particularly glaring example is the lack of reference in the sources to a prominent Safavid commander named Ḥusayn Wirdī Khān, let alone Asad Allāh battling him.¹⁰⁶ The author also dates the Abdālī conquest of Herat to 1124/1712, whereas various sources indicate that this event took place no earlier than 1128/1716. Indeed, contemporary or near contemporary sources paint a much more complex picture of events. As noted earlier, Sulṭān Muḥammad states that Kay Khusraw awarded the leadership (*riyāsat*) of the Abdālī to ‘Abd Allāh when the latter joined Kay Khusraw on his march to Qandahar.¹⁰⁷ When Kay Khusraw died during this campaign late in 1123/1711, a number of Abdālī regrouped in Herat in order to assist in subsequent Safavid campaigns against Mīr Ways in Qandahar. Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn assigned his Head of the Tribal Forces (*qūrchī bāshī*), Muḥammad Zamān Khān Shāmlū, the task of reconquering Qandahar. However the campaign was put on hold when Muḥammad Zamān Khān Shāmlū died in or near Herat in the spring of 1124/1712.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ ‘Alī Muḥammad Khān, *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān*, fols. 36b–39b.

¹⁰⁶ It is possible that the author ‘Alī Muḥammad Khān is, in fact, describing a later battle involving the Safavid and Abdālī forces. The most likely candidate is the battle between the forces of Faṭḥ ‘Alī Khān Turkmān and Asad Allāh in 1129/1717.

¹⁰⁷ Muḥammad Khalīl indicates that ‘Abd Allāh and Asad Allāh arrived from Multan with 500–600 horsemen and joined Kay Khusraw on his march to Qandahar; Muḥammad Khalīl, *Majma‘ al-tawārikh*, 20–21.

¹⁰⁸ Not to be confused with Muḥammad Zāman Khān Abdālī. Mustawfī indicates that Muḥammad Zāman Khān Qūrchī bāshī was the brother of Muḥammad Mu‘min Khān, the I‘timād al-dawla (lit., Pillar of the state) of the Safavids under Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn Ṣafavī; see Mustawfī, *Zubdat al-tawārikh*, 117. For more on Muḥammad Zāman Khān, see Muḥammad Khalīl, *Majma‘ al-tawārikh*, 17–18; Wārid, *Mir‘āt-i wāridāt*, 115; Lockhart, *The Fall of the Ṣafavī Dynasty*, 91; Matthee, *Persia in Crisis*, 204, 235. Mahdī Khān gives his name as Muḥammad Khān Shāmlū, a figure who had served as *bēglarbēg* of Sistan prior to his death; see Mahdī Khān, *Jahāngushā-yi Nādirī*, 5, 86; Naṣīrī, *Alqāb wa mawājib*, 73. Though he should not be confused with yet another Muḥammad Zāman Khān

According to Muḥammad Khalīl, on the eve of their capture of the citadel of Herat, the Abdālī had been camped in the vicinity of the Dū Shākh Mountain located to the west.¹⁰⁹ Muḥammad Khalīl's claim is supported by Ḥazīn Lāhījī who, in his writings, describes a massive Safavid-led force consisting of 8,000 Georgians, 30,000 Abdālī Afghans, and 14,000 men from Khurasan who had gathered in the Herat region for the purposes of invading Qandahar.¹¹⁰ Although it would be difficult to verify the accuracy of Ḥazīn Lāhījī's statement about the massive size of this Abdālī force, it does indicate that a considerable number of Abdālī appeared in Herat after Kay Khusraw's failed campaign in Qandahar in an attempt to aid the Safavids in regaining a foothold in the province. Thus, while 'Alī Muḥammad Khān claims that the Abdālī marched on Herat to invade the province, the evidence suggests that the Abdālī built up a strong presence in the region to participate in subsequent Safavid-led campaigns against the Ghilzay of Qandahar.

The untimely death of the Safavid officer Muḥammad Zamān Khān Shāmlū was a source of a great deal of turmoil in Herat.¹¹¹ This is reflected in the sources, which paint a

Shāmlū, who was active in the years after the aforesaid *qurchī bāshī*'s death in ca. 1123/1712. This latter figure appears to be Muḥammad Zāman Khān Siyāh Manṣūr Charkhchī bāshī (lit., Head of the vanguard), an able commander who was executed in 1130/1718 on the orders of Ṣafī Qulī Khān Turkistān-ughlī, who was later tasked with subduing the Abdālī in Herat; see Bihbahānī, *Badāyi' al-akhbār*, 108-9; Muḥammad Khalīl, *Majma' al-tawārikh*, 27; Muḥammad Kāẓim, *Ālam-ārā-yi Nādirī*, ed. Riyāḥī, 1:23.

¹⁰⁹ Muḥammad Khalīl, *Majma' al-tawārikh*, 20.

¹¹⁰ Ḥazīn Lāhījī, *The Life of Sheikh Mohammed Ali Hazin*, 123. For a letter penned by Ḥazīn Lāhījī describing this affair, see Riazul Islam, *A Calendar of Documents on Indo-Persian Relations*, 2 vols. (Tehran: Iranian Culture Foundation; Karachi: Institute of Central and West Asian Studies, 1979-82), 2:18-19; and Muḥammad 'Alī Ḥazīn Lāhījī, *Rasā'il Ḥazīn Lāhījī*, ed. 'Alī Awjabī et al. (Tehran: Mīrās-i Maktūb, 1377 H.sh./1998), 195. According to this letter, Muḥammad Zāman Khān's nephew Khusraw led the Safavid army on this march. Riazul Islam points out that the reference to Georgian troops with Khusraw indicates that the commander in question is Kay Khusraw, the nephew of Gurgīn Khān, and not Muḥammad Zāman Khān.

¹¹¹ For Hanway's account of events involving the Safavid governor Muḥammad Zamān Khān and the Abdālī chiefs 'Abd Allāh and Asad Allāh, see Hanway, *An Historical Account of the British Trade over the Caspian Sea*, 2:123-24. Hanway's account differs in important respects from the information found in other sources of the period.

very complex picture of events that ensued. The records of the Dutch East India Company, for instance, indicate that Muḥammad ‘Alī Khān—nephew of the grand *wazīr* Faṭḥ ‘Alī Khān Dāghistānī—served as governor of Herat as late as ca. 1127/1715.¹¹² For reasons that remain unclear, Muḥammad ‘Alī was replaced soon thereafter by ‘Abbās Qulī Khān Shāmlū, who was charged with planning another campaign against Mīr Ways at Qandahar. The latter had a difficult time gathering the funds and supplies necessary to mount the campaign, and his ineffective leadership fomented dissatisfaction and dissent in Herat, especially among the soldiers that had gathered in the province.¹¹³

According to Mahdī Khān, ‘Abbās Qulī Khān feared the power and influence of ‘Abd Allāh, his son Asad Allāh, and their many Abdālī supporters in particular. To allay these fears, the governor had the Abdālī chiefs arrested. The Qizilbash of Herat subsequently rebelled against ‘Abbās Qulī Khān and demanded a new governor be sent from Isfahan.¹¹⁴ In response, Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn appointed Ja‘far Khān Ustājilū as his replacement.¹¹⁵ Amid the

¹¹² This Muḥammad ‘Alī Khān seems to be the same “Mahd” ‘Alī Khān described in Dutch East India Records as the Safavid-appointed governor of Farāh who was unable to muster enough funds and troops against Mīr Ways; see Matthee, *Persia in Crisis*, 235. On the career of Faṭḥ ‘Alī Khān Dāghistānī, see pp. 206–15 of Matthee’s study.

¹¹³ Floor, *The Afghan Invasion of Safavid Persia*, 26, 29. Mahdī Khān simply states that the governorship of Herat fell to ‘Abbās Qulī Khān after Muḥammad Zāman Khān’s death. Lockhart infers that ‘Abbās Qulī Khān was a relative of Muḥammad Zāman Khān Shāmlū, but does not indicate the source for this assertion; see Lockhart, *The Fall of the Ṣafavī Dynasty*, 96.

¹¹⁴ Mahdī Khān, *Jahāngushā-yi Nādirī*, 6. Mahdī Khān’s account is largely reproduced in: Muḥammad Khalīl, *Majma‘ al-tawārīkh*, 17–18, 20–21; Sulṭān Muḥammad, *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī*, 98–99; Imām al-Dīn, *Ḥusayn Shāhī*, fols. 7a–9a. Mahdī Khān’s account may also have influenced that of Maḥmūd al-Mūsawī, who suggests that an unspecified governor of Herat appointed ‘Abd Allāh, who recently arrived in the province with his son Asad Allāh, as commander (*sardār*) of the Abdālī however the latter had a falling out with governor and killed him in battle. ‘Abd Allāh is then said to have ordered a general killing (*qatl-i ‘amm*) before capturing Herat; see Maḥmūd al-Mūsawī, *Aḥwāl-i aqwām-i chahārgāna-i Afghān*, fol. 6a.

¹¹⁵ According to Mustawfī, Ja‘far Qulī Khān was known by the sobriquet Ḥātimī on account of his purported descent from Ḥātim-i Ṭā‘ī and was appointed to the governorship of Herat after Muḥammad Zāman Khān Shāmlū’s death. See Mustawfī, *Zubdat al-tawārīkh*, 117; Lockhart, *The Fall of the Ṣafavī Dynasty*, 97n.

commotion that gripped Herat, ‘Abd Allāh and his son Asad Allāh found an opportunity to escape to the Dū Shākh Mountains west of the city where their fellow Abdālī tribesmen had been wintering. From there they marched on the town of Isfizār where they took control of its citadel, gathered more of their Abdālī supporters, and then made their way back to Herat. The Abdālī army then engaged and defeated Ja‘far Khān’s forces outside Herat and laid siege to its citadel.¹¹⁶ According to several sources, the defenders of Herat surrendered in 1128/1716.¹¹⁷ ‘Abd Allāh and his Abdālī followers subsequently extended control over Herat’s dependencies between Jām in the west and Bādghīs in the northeast.¹¹⁸ ‘Abd Allāh’s son Asad Allāh also took control of Farāh, which the Ghilzay had invaded in the previous year.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁶ According to Muḥammad Kāzim, Ja‘far Khān requested the aid of Manṣūr Khān Shāhsiwan, the then governor of Mashhad, against the Abdālī; Muḥammad Kāzim, *‘Ālam-ārā-yi Nādirī*, ed. Riyāḥī, 1:20–21. But the author likely conflated the Abdālī conquest of Herat against Ja‘far Khān with Manṣūr Khān’s attempt to retake the city in 1717. Most of the sources agree that the Safavid governor defeated by the Abdālī was Ja‘far Khān Ustājilū. But there is some disagreement surrounding Ja‘far Khān’s fate. Mustawfī suggests he fled during battle to the citadel in Herat but was attacked there and killed by “Sa‘dullāh” (read: Asad Allāh); Mustawfī, *Zubdat al-tawārīkh*, 118. Wārid suggests Ja‘far Khān was imprisoned by “Sa‘dullāh” and later killed; Wārid, *Mir’āt-i wāridāt*, 117; Mahdī Khān, and later authors relying on him, asserts Ja‘far Khān was captured in battle and imprisoned by Asad Allāh, only to be killed by the latter’s replacement, Zamān Khān; Mahdī Khān, *Jahāngushā-yi Nādirī*, 6–8; Muḥammad Khalīl, *Majma‘ al-tawārīkh*, 21, 29; Sulṭān Muḥammad, *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī*, 98. Muḥammad Kāzim suggests Asad Allāh treated him leniently and allowed him to return to his homeland; Muḥammad Kāzim, *‘Ālam-ārā-yi Nādirī*, ed. Riyāḥī, 1:22. The latter view seems reasonable, since according to the records of the VOC, Ja‘far Khān was “recalled from” Herat to Isfahan in 1716; see Floor, *The Afghan Invasion of Safavid Persia*, 29. It appears Ja‘far Khān arrived in Isfahan after the Abdālī had taken Herat—an event that prompted Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn to dispatch an army led by Fath ‘Alī Khān to re-assert Safavid control over the province.

¹¹⁷ Muḥammad Khalīl, Mustawfī, Kirmānī and Wārid agree that the surrender of Herat took place in 1128/1716; see Muḥammad Khalīl, *Majma‘ al-tawārīkh*, 19–21; Mustawfī, *Zubdat al-tawārīkh*, 117; Wārid, *Mir’āt-i wāridāt*, 117; Mu‘min Kirmānī, *Ṣaḥīfat al-irshād*, 447–48. Muḥammad Kāzim, whose information is at times sketchy, gives the date of 1122/1710–11, which is far too early; Muḥammad Kāzim, *‘Ālam-ārā-yi Nādirī*, ed. Riyāḥī, 1:22. Hanway notes dates the Abdālī takeover of Herat to 1717, while Mahdī Khān gives the date of 26 Ramaḍān 1129/2 September 1717; see Hanway, *An Historical Account of the British Trade over the Caspian Sea*, 2:124; Mahdī Khān, *Jahāngushā-yi Nādirī*, 5–6; repeated in Sulṭān Muḥammad, *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī*, 98. However, this date is too late since Ja‘far Khān’s replacement, Fath ‘Alī Khān Turkmān, was killed in battle against the Abdālī of Herat in Sha‘bān 1129/July 1717. The bulk of evidence suggests the Abdālī conquest of Herat took place in 1128/1716.

¹¹⁸ As it pertains to the lands that fell to the Abdālī, Mustawfī suggests that they established control of the lands of Herat up until Jām in the west; Mustawfī, *Zubdat al-tawārīkh*, 117–18. Muḥammad Khalīl states that the Abdālī

When news of Ja‘far Khān’s defeat reached Isfahan, Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn sent his Master of the Hunt (*mīr-shikār bāshī*), Faṭḥ ‘Alī Khān Turkmān, and governor of Mashhad, to restore Safavid control over Herat. Upon learning of Faṭḥ ‘Alī Khān’s approach, an Abdālī army commanded by Asad Allāh met him near Kūsūya. In the ensuing battle, Faṭḥ ‘Alī Khān defeated Asad Allāh’s forces who retreated towards Herat. The Safavid commander pursued the Abdālī to Ghūriyān but his forces were crushed and he himself was killed in battle. The victory over Faṭḥ ‘Alī Khān, which resulted in the Abdālī acquiring a great deal of booty, equipment, and confidence, appears to have taken place in 18 Sha‘bān 1129/27 July 1717.¹²⁰

Manṣūr Khān Shāhsiwan replaced Faṭḥ ‘Alī Khān as governor of Mashhad and marched on Herat with an army.¹²¹ Asad Allāh and his men defeated Manṣūr Khān who

assumed control over the districts of Ūba, Shāfilān, Kūsūya, Ghūriyān, Pūriyān, Jām, Langar, Khwāf, Bākharz, Zūzan, Maymana, Farāh, to Sistan in the south, Bādghīs in the north, and Murghāb; see Muḥammad Khalīl, *Majma‘ al-tawārīkh*, 21. This geographic expanse roughly corresponds with Mahdī Khān’s statement that the Abdālī controlled the districts of Kūsūya, Ghūriyān, to the Murghāb and Bādghīs in the east; see Mahdī Khān, *Jahāngushā-yi Nādirī*, 6. The TMA indicates that the Abdālī established control over Murghāb, Bādghīs, Kūsūya, Tūn, Ṭabas, Turtab [=Turbat], Kā’in [=Qā’in], Saghrā’in [=Isfarā’in]; see ‘Alī Muḥammad Khān, *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān*, fol. 39b. For geographical details of Herat, see Noelle-Karimi, *The Pearl in Its Midst*, 17–43.

¹¹⁹ Mahdī Khān, *Jahāngushā-yi Nādirī*, 6; Muḥammad Khalīl, *Majma‘ al-tawārīkh*, 21; ‘Alī Muḥammad Khān, *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān*, fols. 39b–40a.

¹²⁰ Mahdī Khān, *Jahāngushā-yi Nādirī*, 7; Wārid, *Mir‘āt-i wāridāt*, 117; Muḥammad Khalīl, *Majma‘ al-tawārīkh*, 21–22; Mustawfī, *Zubdat al-tawārīkh*, 118–20; Muḥammad Kāẓim, *Ālam-ārā-yi Nādirī*, ed. Riyāḥī, 1:22; Floor, *The Afghan Invasion of Safavid Persia*, 40. According to Mustawfī, Manṣūr Khān Shāhsiwan was sent to Herat after Ja‘far Khān’s defeat but was defeated and retired to Mashhad, at which time he was replaced as governor by Faṭḥ ‘Alī Khān Turkmān, who reached Mashhad in 7 Shawwāl 1126/October 1714; see Mustawfī, *Zubdat al-tawārīkh*, 117–18. But as noted earlier, Ja‘far Khān reached Isfahan in 1716. Moreover, as Faẓl ‘Alī Bayāt points out in his memoirs, Faṭḥ ‘Alī Khān was assigned to invade Herat in 1128/1716, and was then followed in the same year by Manṣūr Khān; see Bihbahānī, *Badāyi‘ al-akhbār*, 107–8.

¹²¹ This appears to be the same Manṣūr Khān who earlier served as one of Gurgīn Khān’s commanders in Qandahar. While Faẓl ‘Alī suggests that Manṣūr Khān replaced Faṭḥ ‘Alī Khān, Mustawfī and, following him, Wārid assert that the opposite is true. They thus have Faṭḥ ‘Alī Khān battle Asad Allāh after Manṣūr Khān’s retreat to Mashhad; Mustawfī, *Zubdat al-tawārīkh*, 118; Wārid, *Mir‘āt-i wāridāt*, 117–18. The sequence of events given in Faẓl ‘Alī’s memoirs appear more correct. Not only does he provide precise dates for these events he describes, Faẓl ‘Alī also gives an explanation for Asad Allāh’s march on Mashhad, which both Wārid and Mustawfī neglect to mention.

retreated to Mashhad on 23 Ramaḍān 1129/30 August 1717. Asad Allāh's forces pursued Maṣṣūr Khān and proceeded to lay siege to Mashhad. After roughly a month, Asad Allāh and his forces lifted the siege and made their way to Nīshāpūr and plundered the village of Qadamgāh for days before returning to Herat on 7 Dhū al-Qa'ḍa 1129/12 October 1717.¹²²

The Battle of Dilārām

After returning from Nīshāpūr, Asad Allāh marched on Farāh to do battle with Mīr Maḥmūd b. Mīr Ways, who was on his way from Qandahar.¹²³ The underlying motives for this battle are unclear. 'Alī Muḥammad Khān presents it as an attempt by the Abdālī to regain control of their ancestral lands (*mulk-i mawrūsī*), i.e., Qandahar, from the Ghilzay.¹²⁴ But this seems unlikely, given that Asad Allāh had been campaigning a few months earlier in Khurasan and was not in a position to launch an invasion of Qandahar. In all likelihood, as suggested by Maḥdī Khān, Asad Allāh marched on Farāh to defend it from Mīr Maḥmūd's invasion. The Ghilzay and Abdālī armies met at Dilārām between Farāh and Zamīndāwar.

¹²² Bihbahānī, *Badāyi' al-akhbār*, 107–8. Relying solely on Mustawfī, Lockhart writes that Asad Allāh made his way to Mashhad after defeating Faṭḥ 'Alī Khān; see Mustawfī, *Zubdat al-tawārīkh*, 119–21; Lockhart, *The Fall of the Ṣafavī Dynasty*, 98. Faṣl 'Alī, on the other hand, indicates that Asad Allāh marched on Mashhad after defeating Maṣṣūr Khān Shāhsiwan.

¹²³ Muḥammad Khalīl incorrectly states that after defeating Ṣafī Qulī Khān, Asad Allāh and the Abdālī turned to Farāh; Muḥammad Khalīl, *Majma' al-tawārīkh*, 27–29. However Asad Allāh made his way to Farāh and was killed at Dilārām before Ṣafī Qulī Khān appeared in Herat. Moreover, when Ṣafī Qulī Khān reached Herat, he battled the forces of Zamān Khān, not those of Asad Allāh.

¹²⁴ 'Alī Muḥammad Khān, *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i 'ālī-shān*, fols. 40b–41a. In this passage of the TMA, we are told that Mīr Maḥmūd Hōtakī took control of Shahr-i Ṣafā and evicted the Abdālī from Arghasān. As noted earlier, it is highly unlikely that the Abdālī would have remained in Shahr-i Ṣafā until this time.

Mīr Maḥmūd's forces soundly defeated the Abdālī and Asad Allāh was killed.¹²⁵ The Battle of Dilārām took place in either late 1129/1717 or, more likely, early 1130/1718.¹²⁶

The victory at Dilārām was an important turning point for the Ghilzay. Initially it allowed Mīr Maḥmūd to establish control of Farāh. He sent news of his victory, along with the heads of Asad Allāh and the other Abdālī leaders, to the Safavid ruler Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn. According to Mahdi Khan, Mīr Maḥmūd presented himself as a servant of the Shāh and in return, the latter sent him gifts and granted him the title Ḥusayn Qulī, literally "Slave of Ḥusayn," an honorific designed to signify the Ghilzay chief's status as Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn's loyal servant.¹²⁷ Mīr Maḥmūd's initial status as the Safavid ruler's subordinate was also observed in the well-known chronogram:

¹²⁵ According to 'Alī Muḥammad Khān (fol. 42a), a figure named Wāṣil Ismā'īlzay who fought alongside the Abdālī treacherously assassinated Asad Allāh.

¹²⁶ Mahdī Khān notes that Asad Allāh's death was commemorated by the chronogram: *Asad rā sag-i Shāh-i Īrān darīd*. This chronogram equates to 1132/1719–20; see Mahdī Khān, *Jahāngushā-yi Nādirī*, 7. Later works that include this same chronogram include Sulṭān Muḥammad, *Tārikh-i Sulṭānī*, 73–74, 99; Mustawfī, *Zubdat al-tawārikh*, 169; 'Abd al-Karīm "Bukhārī," *Histoire de l'Asie Centrale*, 1:6; Lockhart, *Nadir Shah*, 4; Lockhart, *The Fall of the Ṣafavī Dynasty*, 100n3. Likely on the basis of this chronogram, 'Alī Muḥammad Khān (among others) argues that the Battle of Dilārām occurred on Dhū al-Qa'da 1132/September 1720; see 'Alī Muḥammad Khān, *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i 'ālī-shān*, fols. 42a–44a. However there is compelling evidence that the TMA's date is incorrect. For instance, Faẓl 'Alī notes in his memoirs that Asad Allāh laid siege to Mashhad and was subsequently killed in the vicinity of Farāh (i.e., Dilārām). The author places Asad Allāh's death at the end of his account of events in the year 1129/1717. He then resumes his account describing events in 7 Jumādā I 1130/8 April 1718; see Bihbahānī, *Badāyi' al-akhbār*, 108. This would suggest that the Battle of Dilārām took place at some point before May 1718, but after Asad Allāh departed Mashhad for Farāh in October 1717. The view that Asad Allāh's death took place before 1132/1720 is also supported by the fact that the records of the VOC indicate that news of Asad Allāh's death reached Isfahan in March 1719, i.e., 1131; see Floor, *The Afghan Invasion of Safavid Persia*, 40n69. These facts confirm that the Battle of Dilārām took place at some point between October 1717 and May 1718. They also suggest that the chronogram recorded in Mahdī Khān's history, which has been the source of much confusion among later authors, most likely refers to the date when the verses were composed and not the year of Asad Allāh's death at Dilārām.

¹²⁷ Mahdī Khān, *Jahāngushā-yi Nādirī*, 6–7; Muḥammad Khalīl, *Majma' al-tawārikh*, 29; Mustawfī, *Zubdat al-tawārikh*, 123–24, 169; Savory, *Iran under the Safavids*, 245; and Floor, *The Afghan Invasion of Safavid Persia*, 40. According to the TMA, Asad Allāh's body was taken to Herat and buried at Rawzat Bāgh; 'Alī Muḥammad Khān, *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i 'ālī-shān*, fols. 42a–42b.

The Shāh of Iran's dog mauled the lion

Asad rā sag-i Shāh-i Īrān darīd

Here Mīr Maḥmūd, who is generally treated with scorn by Iranian authors given his role in the destructive invasion of the Safavid capital of Isfahan, is pejoratively referred to as the dog of Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn, while the use of the term lion (*asad*) is a play on the name of Asad Allāh, which may be translated as “lion of God.”

Mīr Maḥmūd also proposed forming an alliance with the Safavids against their mutual Abdālī adversaries in Herat. To this end, in 1132/1719–20, the Safavid ruler sent his commander Ismā‘īl Khān Ghulām to invade Herat apparently with the expectation that Mīr Maḥmūd would also march on the city from Qandahar. The joint Safavid-Ghilzay invasion of Herat did not materialize since Mīr Maḥmūd was preoccupied for several months with affairs in Sistan and Kirman before returning to Qandahar to quell a rebellion led by Safavid loyalists. Shortly after, in 1134/1721, Mīr Maḥmūd gathered an army and launched an invasion of Kirman and, as his activities met with minimal resistance, he continued his march to Isfahan where he defeated a Safavid army in March and eventually entered the city in October of the same year.¹²⁸

Zamān Khān Abdālī as Ruler of Herat

Meanwhile, the situation in Herat after the defeat of the Abdālī at Dilārām is poorly documented and thus unclear. However, this much can be pieced together from the scant evidence available in the sources: after Asad Allāh's death, the Abdālī forces retreated to Herat and convened an assembly to determine Asad Allāh's replacement. As Asad Allāh's father ‘Abd Allāh was too old and distraught because his son's death, many of those present

¹²⁸ Maḥdī Khān, *Jahāngushā-yi Nādirī*, 7–15.

at the assembly deemed him unfit to lead them. Sulṭān Muḥammad suggests that Zamān Khān, who appears to have been a chief of note within the confederacy, was elected leader of the Abdālī with the backing of his supporters from the Alakōzay clan.¹²⁹ Zamān Khān proceeded to imprison ‘Abd Allāh and the latter is thought to have died while in captivity.¹³⁰

In 1129–30/1717–18, by which time Zamān Khān had been proclaimed leader in Herat, Ṣafī Qulī Khān Turkistān-ughlī, the military commander (*sardār*) of Khurasan, led several successful campaigns against bands of Uzbek raiders in Khurasan. After subduing the Uzbeks, Ṣafī Qulī Khān made his way to Mashhad with the intention of launching an invasion of Herat.¹³¹ Ṣafī Qulī Khān gathered a large army at Mashhad and set out for Herat and was met by Zamān Khān’s forces at Kāfir Qal‘a. In the ensuing battle, Zamān Khān led the Abdālī army to victory against Ṣafī Qulī Khān, who was killed in battle on 29 Jumādā II 1131/19 May

¹²⁹ Sulṭān Muḥammad suggests that ‘Abd al-Ghanī Alakōzay (who is sometimes referred to simply as Ghanī Khān in the sources) supported Zamān Khān’s bid to replace Asad Allāh; Sulṭān Muḥammad, *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī*, 99–100. ‘Alī Muḥammad Khān, on the other hand, reports that Zamān Khān rebelled with ‘Abd al-Ghanī’s father, Khālū Khān, against ‘Abd Allāh and that the latter plotted to have them both killed; see ‘Alī Muḥammad Khān, *Taẓkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān*, fols. 44a–44b.

¹³⁰ The following sources suggest Zamān Khān succeeded Asad Allāh as ruler in Herat: Sulṭān Muḥammad, *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī*, 99–100; Mahdī Khān, *Jahāngushā-yi Nādirī*, 7–8, 88; Muḥammad Khalīl, *Majma‘ al-tawārīkh*, 29; Bihbahānī, *Badāyi‘ al-akhbār*, 108; Imām al-Dīn, *Ḥusayn Shāhī*, fol. 8a; Maḥmūd al-Mūsawī, *Aḥwāl-i aqwām-i chahārgāna-i Afghān*, fol. 6b; Muḥammad Mustajāb ibn Ḥāfiẓ Raḥmat Khān, *Gulistān-i Raḥmat*, MS, British Library, I.O. Islamic 1417, fols. 97a–97b. An exception is the author Mustawfī who suggests that Muḥammad Khān was made the Abdālī ruler of Herat in place of Asad Allāh; Mustawfī, *Zubdat al-tawārīkh*, 123. Mustawfī does not provide a source for his assertion and it is entirely possible that he projected Muḥammad Khān’s leadership to an earlier period.

¹³¹ Mustawfī and Muḥammad Khalīl erroneously suggest that it was Asad Allāh (or Sa‘d Allāh, according to Mustawfī) who battled Ṣafī Qulī Khān; see Mustawfī, *Zubdat al-tawārīkh*, 121–23; Muḥammad Khalīl, *Majma‘ al-tawārīkh*, 22, 27–28; followed by Lockhart, *The Fall of the Ṣafavī Dynasty*, 99. However Mahdī Khān, Wārid, Faẓl ‘Alī, and others confirm that Zamān Khān was, in fact, the Abdālī leader who battled Ṣafī Qulī Khān; see Mahdī Khān, *Jahāngushā-yi Nādirī*, 8; Wārid, *Mir‘āt-i wāridāt*, 126–27; Bihbahānī, *Badāyi‘ al-akhbār*, 109–10; Floor, *The Afghan Invasion of Safavid Persia*, 40–41n73.

1719.¹³² Although plans were made to launch further invasions of Herat, the battle at Kāfir Qal‘a proved to be the last major Iranian assault on the province until the campaigns of Nādir Afshār in 1729 and 1731–32.¹³³

Among the few attested documentary sources of Zamān Khān’s rule in Herat is a decree he issued in Sha‘bān 1131/June–July 1719, shortly after the victory over Ṣafī Qulī Khān. The decree declares that Zamān Khān dispatched a certain Yaḥyā Khān, the Head of the Dīwān (*dīwān bēg*), at the head of an Abdālī contingent to punish a certain Qāsim Balūch who, it is claimed, had been harassing the population and especially the peasantry (*ra‘āyā*) of the towns of Ṭabas and Qā’in in southern Khurasan. The decree also requests that the local inhabitants cooperate with the Abdālī force.¹³⁴

Beyond the armed confrontations with Safavid forces in Herat and its environs that culminated in Zamān Khān’s decisive victory over Ṣafī Qulī Khān, little data has come down

¹³² The date of this battle is recorded in Bihbahānī, *Badāyi‘ al-akhbār*, 109–10. Muḥammad Khalīl, *Majma‘ al-tawārīkh*, 28 recounts three alternate versions of how Ṣafī Qulī Khān died. To summarize, they are as follows: i) the Afghans killed him in battle; ii) he was killed at the hands of his treacherous commanders; and iii) he blew himself up. The more dramatic tradition of Ṣafī Qulī Khān blowing himself up is repeated in Muḥammad Kāẓim, *‘Ālam-ārā-yi Nādirī*, ed. Riyāḥī, 1:23; Mustawfī, *Zubdat al-tawārīkh*, 123; and Lockhart, *The Fall of the Ṣafavī Dynasty*, 99. Mahdī Khān and Faẓl ‘Alī suggest Ṣafī Qulī Khān was killed in battle; Mahdī Khān, *Jahāngushā-yi Nādirī*, 7–8.

¹³³ According to Mahdī Khān, when Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn learned of Ṣafī Qulī Khān’s defeat, he dispatched a commander named Ismā‘īl Khān Ghulām to Khurasan for the purposes of invading Herat. However, the expedition to Herat was apparently delayed as Ismā‘īl Khān did not reach Nīshāpūr until 10 Shawwāl 1133/4 August 1721 and Mashhad until 22 Ṣafar 1134/12 December 1721—a full year later. It does not appear that Ismā‘īl Khān ever launched an invasion of Herat. See Mahdī Khān, *Jahāngushā-yi Nādirī*, 9–11; Bihbahānī, *Badāyi‘ al-akhbār*, 111. There is little reason to accept the account in the *TMA*, seemingly built upon the account in Mahdī Khān’s *TN*, of ‘Abd Allāh marching on Mashhad to do battle with Ismā‘īl Khān’s forces in 1133/1721; ‘Alī Muḥammad Khān, *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shāh*, fols. 42a–43b.

¹³⁴ Cited in Bihbahānī, *Badāyi‘ al-akhbār*, 125–27. This Yaḥyā Khān appears to be the governor of Sarakhs who is described in Faẓl ‘Alī’s memoirs as having appeared in Khurasan in 17 Ramaḍān 1131/4 August 1719; see Bihbahānī, *Badāyi‘ al-akhbār*, 110. Yaḥyā Khān may well have been in Khurasan to stem the Balūchī raids in the area, as described in Zamān Khān’s decree. Yaḥyā Khān’s death in 1135/1722 is described in Mustawfī, *Zubdat al-tawārīkh*, 176. For further details on the post of *dīwān bēg*, see §6.2, note 44.

to us about the period of Abdālī rule in Herat.¹³⁵ An exception is the memoir (*Tazkira*) of Muḥammad Rizā Barnābādī, a scion of a prominent class of landowners known as the Khwājas of Barnābād, a village in the Herat region. In his memoir, Muḥammad Rizā recounts how Asad Allāh Abdālī demanded an exorbitant amount of revenues from his ancestor who at the time served as leader of Barnābād. The author indicates that the heavy-handed treatment of the representatives of the Abdālī regime towards his ancestors was the source of much discontent and caused the Khwājas to petition Nādir Shāh for assistance.¹³⁶

The documentary record is otherwise largely silent on the era of Abdālī rule in Herat and so it is difficult to assess prevailing social conditions, day-to-day affairs of state, etc. The fact that so little data has survived on this period is unsurprising considering the instability that plagued the region in the first half of the eighteenth century. The political uncertainty that characterized the era of Abdālī rule in Herat is further evidenced by the frequent references in the sources to discord among the tribal confederacy's leadership that resulted in the deaths of the chiefs 'Abd Allāh Khān and Zamān Khān. Although sources disagree on the manner in which 'Abd Allāh Khān and Zamān Khān met their end, there is indication that it was the result of an internal feud that not only continued beyond their deaths but intensified among their progeny.

According to 'Alī Muḥammad Khān, 'Abd Allāh took power in Herat after Asad Allāh's death at Dilārām, which he asserts took place on September 1720. 'Abd Allāh then marched on Mashhad in Jumādā I 1133/February-March 1721 and left his brother-in-law Zamān Khān

¹³⁵ The *TASH* refers to Zamān Khān's time in power in Herat in passing only. See Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, ed. Murādōf, 1:12b–13a.

¹³⁶ Muḥammad Rizā Barnābādī, *Tazkira-i Muḥammad Rizā Barnābādī*, fac. ed. and trans. Natalija Nikolaevna Tumanovich (Moscow: Nauka, 1984), 33b–34a; Māyil Harawī, *Mīrzāyān-i Barnābād* (Kabul: Anjuman-i Tārīkh-i Afghānistān, 1348 H.sh./1969), 47; Noelle-Karimi, *The Pearl in Its Midst*, 136–37; and Natalija Nikolaevna Tumanovich, *Gerat v XVI-XVIII vekakh* (Moscow: Nauka, 1989), 159, 214–16.

b. Dawlat Khān to govern the city.¹³⁷ But when he learned that Zamān Khān and his ally Khālū Khān Alakōzay had usurped power in Herat, ‘Abd Allāh aborted this campaign and returned to the city. After re-capturing its citadel, ‘Abd Allāh imprisoned Zamān Khān and Khālū Khān and both were executed at Rawzat Bāgh, a site just south of Herat, in Sha‘bān 1133/May 1721. However, on 22 Muḥarram 1134/13 November 1721, a rival named Qāsim Khān killed ‘Abd Allāh and assumed control of Herat.¹³⁸ ‘Abd Allāh was avenged by his brother Muqarrab Khān, who made his way from Multan to Herat to kill Qāsim. Muqarrab Khān awaited the arrival of his nephew, Muḥammad Khān b. ‘Abd Allāh, who assumed rule in Herat in Ramaḍān 1134/June–July 1722. Muqarrab Khān then returned to Multan.¹³⁹

Once again, ‘Alī Muḥammad Khān’s account poses several historical problems. For one, his account of Qāsim Khān and Muqarrab Khān is not, to my knowledge, corroborated by any other dependable source. Moreover, the assertion that ‘Abd Allāh had Zamān Khān executed in 1133/1721 is contradicted by the documentary evidence, which indicates: that Zamān Khān was elected by his peers after Asad Allāh’s death; that ‘Abd Allāh died soon after being imprisoned by Zamān Khān; and that Zamān Khān did battle with Ṣafī Qulī Khān in 1131/1719 and issued an official decree from Herat in the summer of the same year. These facts suggest that Zamān Khān ruled Herat two years prior to the date when ‘Alī Muḥammad Khān alleges he usurped power for a brief period. There is also evidence that ‘Abd Allāh was

¹³⁷ ‘Alī Muḥammad Khān, *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān*, fols. 42a–43b.

¹³⁸ ‘Alī Muḥammad Khān, *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān*, fols. 44a–47a. ‘Alī Muḥammad Khān describes Qāsim Khān as a descendent of Jalāl Khān Za‘farān Khēl. He also notes that ‘Abd Allāh left behind four sons: Asad Allāh, who died in his father’s lifetime and was of a Mughaliyya mother; Khān Muḥammad Khān, whose mother was a sister of Zamān Khān; Allāh Yār Khān, whose mother was also a “Mughaliyya”; and ‘Alī Yār Khān, whose mother was a *Fārsī-zabān*. There is indication that ‘Abd Allāh had at least one other son named ‘Abd al-Raḥmān, or simply Raḥmān, who is not mentioned in the *TMA*.

¹³⁹ ‘Alī Muḥammad Khān, *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān*, fols. 47a–49b.

imprisoned and killed soon after Zamān Khān took power, indicating that he could not have been alive in 1133/1721, as intimated in the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ʿālī-shān*.

ʿAlī Muḥammad Khān's problematic account of ʿAbd Allāh's killing of Zamān Khān cannot be relied upon and leaves the question of Zamān Khān's death unanswered. Several sources agree that one of ʿAbd Allāh's sons came to Herat to avenge their father by killing Zamān Khān, though there is disagreement as to which sons are responsible. Muḥammad Kāẓim suggests that Allāh Yār Khān b. ʿAbd Allāh had Zamān Khān imprisoned and killed in Herat and subsequently took over.¹⁴⁰ Other sources point to another son of ʿAbd Allāh, Muḥammad Khān, as having replaced Zamān Khān.¹⁴¹ It is possible that ʿAlī Muḥammad Khān's account of ʿAbd Allāh's execution of Zamān Khān and Khālū Khān at Rawzat Bāgh in Shaʿbān 1133/May 1721 actually applies to one of ʿAbd Allāh's sons, Allāh Yār Khān or Muḥammad Khān.¹⁴² Indeed, Sulṭān Muḥammad's statement that Zamān Khān was in power in Herat for two years and five months would corroborate the view that he was killed in 1133/1721.¹⁴³ For if Zamān Khān assumed chieftaincy in late 1130 or early 1131 (i.e., between the summer of 1718 and the spring of 1719) and ruled for roughly two and a half years, this

¹⁴⁰ Muḥammad Kāẓim, *Ālam-ārā-yi Nādirī*, ed. Riyāḥī, 1:151. A similar version of events is recounted in: Leech, "An Account of the Early Abdalees," 467; Ḥayāt Khān, *Ḥayāt-i Afghānī*, 137. The view that suggest the rivalry between Allāh Yār Khān and Zamān Khān seems to be a garbled and retrospective version of the rivalry that erupted between Zū al-Faqār Khān and Allāh Yār Khān, as described in the works of Mahdī Khān, Muḥammad Khalīl and others.

¹⁴¹ For instance, Maḥmūd al-Mūsawī explicitly states that Muḥammad Khān did battle with Zamān Sulṭān and subsequently took control of Herat; see Maḥmūd al-Mūsawī, *Aḥwāl-i aqwām-i chahārgāna-i Afghān*, fol. 6b. Whereas both ʿAlī Muḥammad Khān and Maḥmūd al-Mūsawī indicate Muḥammad Khān arrived from Multan, Sulṭān Muḥammad suggests he arrived from Shōrābak; see Sulṭān Muḥammad, *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī*, 100.

¹⁴² The TASH confirms that Zamān Khān's grave is located at Rawzat Bāgh in Herat; Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, ed. Murādōf, 1:263b.

¹⁴³ Sulṭān Muḥammad, *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī*, 100.

would place his death in 1133/1721, or the year in which he is alleged in the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān* to have been killed.

While the sources tend to agree that Muḥammad Khān came to power soon thereafter, and perhaps even succeeded, Zamān Khān, they do not clearly indicate when. Mahdī Khān only notes that in 1135/1722, Muḥammad Khān organized raids in Khurasan and laid siege to Mashhad and plundered its environs before returning to Herat.¹⁴⁴ This seems to imply that Muḥammad Khān assumed the leadership of the confederacy prior to the raids in Khurasan. The Afghans rebelled against Muḥammad Khān and invited Zamān Khān’s son Zū al-Faqār Khān—the brother of the future Aḥmad Shāh—from Shōrābak and installed him as governor of Herat in place of Muḥammad Khān, who retired to Multan.¹⁴⁵ That Zū al-Faqār Khān was summoned to replace Muḥammad Khān supports the assertion that the latter was involved in Zamān Khān’s deposition and death and that the latter was, in turn, responsible for ‘Abd Allāh’s death.

Zamān Khān’s son Zū al-Faqār Khān ruled from Herat until 1137/1724, when Raḥmān Khān entered the province to avenge the death of his father, ‘Abd Allāh, at the hands of Zamān Khān. In an effort to establish peace, the Afghans of Herat sent Raḥmān Khān to Farāh and Zū al-Faqār Khān to Bākharz.¹⁴⁶ In 1138/1726, Allāh Yār Khān b. ‘Abd Allāh was

¹⁴⁴ Mahdī Khān, *Jahāngushā-yi Nādirī*, 88; Muḥammad Khalīl, *Majma‘ al-tawārīkh*, 29–30; Sulṭān Muḥammad, *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī*, 100; Maḥmūd al-Mūsawī, *Aḥwāl-i aqwām-i chahārgāna-i Afghān*, fols. 6b–7a. Muḥammad Khalīl gives the later date of 1139 for Muḥammad Khān’s raids in Mashhad.

¹⁴⁵ In ‘Alī Muḥammad Khān’s version of events, which are not corroborated by any other source, Shāh Nawāz Khūkānī was one such dissident who invited Zū al-Faqār Khān to rule Herat in Muḥammad Khān’s stead. The arrival of Zū al-Faqār Khān and his brother ‘Alī Mardān Khān from Shōrābak sparked a feud with Muḥammad Khān that ultimately resulted in the latter retiring to Multan in Shawwāl 1136/June–July 1724. See ‘Alī Muḥammad Khān, *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān*, fols. 49b–51b.

¹⁴⁶ Mahdī Khān, *Jahāngushā-yi Nādirī*, 88; Muḥammad Khalīl, *Majma‘ al-tawārīkh*, 30; Muḥammad Mustajāb, *Gulistān-i Raḥmat*, fol. 97b. Muḥammad Khalīl refers to him as ‘Abd al-Raḥmān. It is curious that ‘Alī Muḥammad Khān does not refer to Raḥmān/‘Abd al-Raḥmān in the *TMA*. Rather, in his account of events, when Allāh Yār Khān b. ‘Abd Allāh arrived from Multan, he replaced Zū al-Faqār Khān as ruler of Herat.

summoned from Multan and assumed control of Herat.¹⁴⁷ But Allāh Yār Khān's assumption of rule was opposed by 'Abd al-Ghanī Alakōzay.¹⁴⁸ This is likely because of the role played by Allāh Yār Khān's relatives in the death of 'Abd al-Ghanī's father, Khālu Khān. 'Abd al-Ghanī thus summoned his ally Zū al-Faqār Khān from Bakhārz. This was followed by six months of unrest, at which point the Afghan population is said to have sent Zū al-Faqār Khān to Mārūchāq and Allāh Yār Khān to Farāh, leaving Herat itself leaderless.¹⁴⁹ But when the Abdālī were notified of the advance of an army under the command of Nādir Afshār, their leaders were compelled to settle their differences, even if only temporarily. It was agreed that Zū al-Faqār Khān would be given control of Farāh while Allāh Yār Khān would be given control of Herat and each would defend his respective center against Nādir Afshār's forces.

Conclusions

While the details surrounding the frenetic rivalry that emerged among the chiefs of the Abdālī *ulūs* for control of Herat can be distracting, the following basic conclusion may be drawn from the foregoing analysis. The Abdālī conquest of Herat was not immediate, but rather the gradual outcome of decades of ineffective Safavid rule. When Mīr Ways assumed control in Qandahar in 1121/1709, the Safavids proved unable to muster the funds, supplies, and army necessary to retake the province. There seems to have been a great deal of discord within the ranks of the Qizilbash, or Safavid military, and they proved powerless to prevent

¹⁴⁷ According to 'Alī Muḥammad Khān, Allāh Yār Khān entered Herat and assumed rule in Dhū al-Ḥijja 1136/August-September 1724; see 'Alī Muḥammad Khān, *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i 'ālī-shān*, fols. 50a-51b.

¹⁴⁸ Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī describes 'Abd al-Ghanī as having served as a middling *ishik-āqāsī* or "chamberlain" during Zamān Khān's governorship of Herat. See Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, ed. Murādōf, 1:18a.

¹⁴⁹ Sulṭān Muḥammad, *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī*, 101; 'Alī Muḥammad Khān, *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i 'ālī-shān*, fols. 52a-52b; Maḥmūd al-Mūsawī, *Aḥwāl-i aqwām-i chahārgāna-i Afghān*, fol. 7a. N.b., 'Alī Muḥammad Khān and Maḥmūd al-Mūsawī assert that Zū al-Faqār Khān was sent to Farāh while Allāh Yār Khān was sent to Mārūchāq.

the Abdālī takeover of Herat. The various internal crises plaguing the Safavid empire must have been evident to the Abdālī tribesmen who arrived in Herat in ca. 1124/1712. It is natural that they would have grown impatient with the inability of the Safavid commanders to prepare for the invasion of Qandahar. The Ghilzay invasion of Farāh in 1127/1715 seems also to have stirred the Abdālī camped nearby into action and led to their invasion of Herat in 1128/1716. Between 1128/1716 and 1131/1719, the Abdālī scored impressive victories over the Safavid armies sent against them, and this enabled the new tribal regime to strengthen its hold over Herat.

The conquest of Herat was a key factor precipitating the large-scale migration of Abdālī into the region. According to Mahdī Khān, the Abdālī confederacy consisted of more or less 60,000 families at this time. He also adds that a large number of Afghans arrived from Isfizār and settled in Herat after Asad Allāh took control of its citadel. Muḥammad Khalīl repeats Mahdī Khān's statement that the Abdālī numbered 60,000 families and adds that the confederacy had been wintering at the Dū Shākh Mountains at the time of Asad Allāh's invasion. Muḥammad Kāẓim, who likely also derived his information from Mahdī Khān, suggests that Asad Allāh settled 60,000 Abdālī families from the Qandahar region in Herat. Wārid also reports that a large number of Abdālī relocated to Herat during the rule of Asad Allāh. 'Alī Muḥammad Khān also notes the Abdālī confederacy took up residence in Herat in Asad Allāh's lifetime.¹⁵⁰ On the basis of this evidence, the Abdālī presence in Herat should be dated to the 1720s.

¹⁵⁰ Mahdī Khān, *Jahāngushā-yi Nādirī*, 5–6; Muḥammad Khalīl, *Majma' al-tawārīkh*, 19–20; Muḥammad Kāẓim, *Ālam-ārā-yi Nādirī*, ed. Riyāḥī, 1:22; Wārid, *Mir'āt-i wāridāt*, 116–17; 'Abd al-Karīm "Bukhārī," *Histoire de l'Asie Centrale*, 1:7; 'Alī Muḥammad Khān, *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i 'ālī-shān*, fol. 39b. As noted in §2.3, there is little evidence to support Muḥammad Khalīl's statement (p. 19) that the Abdālī migrated from the Kabul region to Herat in 1000/1591–92.

The growing political influence of the Abdālī coincided with a crisis of leadership. The main actors vying for political influence were the chiefs ‘Abd Allāh Khān and Zamān Khān, as well as their descendants. According to the Abdālī genealogical histories, the immediate ancestors of both ‘Abd Allāh Khān (Ḥayāt Khān, Khudādād Khān) and Zamān Khān (Dawlat Khān) had served as chiefs of the confederacy in Qandahar in the seventeenth century but it is unclear whether the dispute between ‘Abd Allāh and Zamān Khān was perceived as a development specific to the eighteenth century or as a continuation of some earlier rivalry between their ancestors. The evidence seems to point to the confederacy being rather egalitarian and not hierarchically organized at this stage, though the Abdālī genealogical histories assert that the confederacy had long possessed a recognized ruling class. Specifically, they suggest that the leadership of the confederacy was restricted to the descendants of a common ancestor of ‘Abd Allāh and Zamān Khān named Sadō, particularly through the line of the latter’s son Khwāja Khiḥr. As noted in Chapter 4, both Sadō and Khwāja Khiḥr are not mentioned in sources prior to the eighteenth century and it seems entirely possible that both figures were invented and incorporated into Abdālī genealogy in order to address a perceived need to establish a royal lineage for the Abdālī who, as the leadership dispute characterizing their rule in Herat demonstrates, lacked a clearly defined and widely accepted “legitimate” ruling class in pre-Durrānī times.

Notwithstanding the internecine conflicts that destabilized Abdālī rule at Herat in the early eighteenth century, the confederacy was able to take advantage of the ineptness of the Safavid state by frequently launching raids into Khurasan. A recently discovered memoir written by a contemporary author offers firsthand reports of a series of Abdālī raids in Khurasan—especially the towns of Khwāf and Qā’in—between 9 Sha‘bān 1134/22 May 1722

and 10 Rajab 1139/3 March 1727.¹⁵¹ Unfortunately the memoir does not provide many details about the raiders or their leaders but the dates in question correspond roughly to the period when Muḥammad Khān b. ʿAbd Allāh and Zū al-Faqār Khān b. Zamān Khān, and Allāh Yār Khān b. ʿAbd Allāh were in power in Herat. Thus, while the rule of the Abdālī in Herat was plagued by internal rivalries, they did not necessarily prevent the confederacy’s leaders from organizing raids in Khurasan. Moreover, while the hostile author of the memoir represents the Abdālī as a predominantly destructive force in Khurasan, there is also evidence that they formed political alliances with local leaders like Yaḥyā Khān, the governor of Sarakhs, to defend the region against Balūchī raids. As discussed below, the Abdālī also established friendly relations with Mīrzā Shafīʿ, the *kōtwāl*, or “custodian” of Sangān, perhaps towards similar ends.¹⁵²

5.5: The Abdālī in the Nādirid Period (1726–47)

The Nādirid Conquest of Abdālī Herat (1727, 1731–32)

Nādir Afshār, the future Shāh of Iran who began his career as a tribal leader in the service of the Safavid ruler Shāh Ṭahmāsp II (r. 1722–32), was largely responsible for bringing an end to the Abdālī incursions in Khurasan. In 1726, soon after attaining the rank of Head of the Tribal Forces (*qūrchi bāshī*) and the honorific title Ṭahmāsp Qulī or “Slave of Ṭahmāsp,” Nādir conducted a series of campaigns in Khurasan to: expel the upstart Malik Maḥmūd Sīstānī from Mashhad; reclaim territories lost to the Ghilzay based in Isfahan and Qandahar; and subdue the Abdālī based in Herat and Farāh. Nādir’s earliest documented altercation with the Abdālī took place in Dhū al-Ḥijja 1139/August 1727 when he departed

¹⁵¹ Abbasi, “Report of Dread, 20–28.

¹⁵² Abbasi notes that the memoir may have been authored by one of the officials of the Safavid administration, which would account for its wholly negative portrayal of the Abdālī; see Abbasi, “Report of Dread,” 18.

Mashhad to undertake a series of campaigns in Qā'in, Khwāf, and Sangān. At this time, Mīrzā Shafīʿ, the *kōtwāl* of the fortress of Sangān, sent word of Nādir's advance to the Abdālī in Herat. The Abdālī leaders—Zū al-Faqār Khān in Farāh, and Allāh Yār Khān in Herat—sent a force led by their commanders Mūsā Khān “Dūngī” Ishāqzay and ʿĪsā Khān Alakōzay to do battle with Nādir's forces outside Sangān, but they were routed. After taking Sangān on 14 Šafar 1140/30 September 1727, Nādir executed Mīrzā Shafīʿ, presumably on account of the support he had lent the Abdālī, and he ordered the fortress of Sangān to be razed. He then sent a detachment to the village of Niyāzābād to meet another Abdālī army on its way to aid the inhabitants of Sangān. After four days of fighting, however, this Abdālī army was forced to retreat to Herat. As his forces were not yet prepared to launch an invasion of Herat, Nādir returned to Mashhad.¹⁵³

Over the next several months Nādir campaigned in Khurasan before returning to Mashhad and preparing to invade Herat. He departed Mashhad on 4 Shawwāl 1141/3 May 1729. His forces engaged an Abdālī army near Kāfir Qalʿa, the site of Zamān Khān's victory over Šafī Qulī Khān a decade earlier, but the battle proved indecisive. The next day Nādir's forces pursued the Abdālī to Kūsūya and defeated them in battle. Yet another battle was fought at Ribāṭ-i Pariyān with the same result. A few days after suffering this last defeat, Allāh Yār Khān sent a messenger to Nādir to negotiate terms but the latter demanded the Abdālī leaders appear before him. Allāh Yār Khān sent ʿAbd al-Ghanī Khān and several other notables of the confederacy to Nādir to conclude a pact of submission (*ʿahd-i iṭāʿat*). But

¹⁵³ Mahdī Khān, *Jahāngushā-yi Nādirī*, 72–77; Muḥammad Kāẓim, *ʿĀlam-ārā-yi Nādirī*, ed. Riyāḥī, 1:80–88; Sulṭān Muḥammad, *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī*, 101–2; Lockhart, *Nadir Shah*, 28–29; Abbasi, “Report of Dread,” 15. N.b., Muḥammad Kāẓim (1:84) asserts that Nādir's forces went to Dīzbād, a town between Niyāzābād and Mashhad, to cut off the Abdālī. Incidentally, the TMA does not include an account of these particular altercations.

negotiations stalled when Zū al-Faqār Khān arrived from Farāh with a large army.¹⁵⁴ Hostilities thus resumed and Nādir sent a detachment to plunder Farāh but also had his forces battle Zū al-Faqār Khān and Allāh Yār Khān on two separate fronts near Shakībān. Nādir's forces repelled the armies of both chiefs, prompting Allāh Yār Khān to again send representatives to sue for peace. This time Nādir demanded for the notables of the Abdālī confederacy to appear before him in person to offer their submission. When they did so, Nādir gave them gifts and robes of honor, recruited some Abdālī fighters into his army, and awarded Allāh Yār Khān the governorship of Herat. He also agreed to return some of Zū al-Faqār Khān's womenfolk and other relatives whom his forces had captured while campaigning in Farāh. After nearly three months in Herat, Nādir returned to Mashhad on 4 Dhū al-Ḥijja 1141/1 July 1729.¹⁵⁵

According to Muḥammad Kāẓim, soon after this altercation, the Abdālī sent a letter to the Ghilzay ruler of Isfahan, Ashraf b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz, requesting his support against Nādir lest he invade Herat and then march on Isfahan.¹⁵⁶ Seeking to confront Nādir while his forces had yet to fully recuperate from the Herat campaign, Shāh Ashraf and his army immediately left Isfahan for Khurasan on 13 Muḥarram 1142/8 August 1729. The governor of Simnān

¹⁵⁴ According to James Fraser, during its encounter with Nādir Shāh at Herat in 1729, the Abdālī army numbered approximately 30,000 horsemen; see James Fraser, *The History of Nadir Shah, Formerly Called Thamas Kuli Khan, the Present Emperor of Persia* (London, 1742), 92.

¹⁵⁵ Mahdī Khān, *Jahāngushā-yi Nādirī*, 89–95; ʿAlī Muḥammad Khān, *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ʿālī-shān*, fols. 52b–55a; Sulṭān Muḥammad, *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī*, 102–6. Though there are exceptions, Mahdī Khān's account of Nādir's campaigns in Herat against the Abdālī is largely reproduced in the *TMA* and *TSu*. Lockhart, *Nadir Shah*, 32–34, also closely follows Mahdī Khān's account. For an alternate yet less reliable account of events, see Muḥammad Kāẓim, *ʿĀlam-ārā-yi Nādirī*, ed. Riyāḥī, 1:93–102.

¹⁵⁶ Ashraf had his cousin Mīr Maḥmūd deposed and took over the reins of power in Isfahan. Mahdī Khān gives Ashraf's date of accession as 12 Shaʿbān 1136/6 May 1724; Sulṭān Muḥammad gives the date of 12 Shaʿbān 1137/25 April 1725. See Mahdī Khān, *Jahāngushā-yi Nādirī*, 15–16; Sulṭān Muḥammad, *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī*, 76–77; also see Lockhart, *Nadir Shah*, 13–14.

reported Ashraf's advance to Nādir who promptly gathered his army and departed Mashhad on 18 Šafar 1142/12 September 1729 to confront the Ghilzay army.¹⁵⁷

Prior to his departure, Nādir left behind his brother Ibrāhīm Khān to govern Mashhad. He then made his way towards Simnān, which the forces of Ashraf had been besieging. The Ghilzay army then withdrew and took up position at the village of Mihmāndūst, to the northeast of Damghān, where the two armies met on 6 Rabīʿ I 1142/29 September 1729.¹⁵⁸ After a fierce battle, Nādir's forces scored an important victory over Ashraf's army, which was led by the seasoned Ghilzay commander Saydāl Khān Nāširī. Following the victory at Mihmāndūst, Nādir went on to defeat the forces Shāh Ashraf before capturing Isfahan by November—a series of events that set the stage for the expulsion of the Ghilzay Afghan conquerors from Iran.¹⁵⁹ After suffering another defeat near Shiraz in December, Ashraf retreated towards Qandahar, which was in the hands of his cousin Mīr Ḥusayn, but was killed along the way. With the Ghilzay threat out of the way, Nādir set his sights on invading Iraq and Azerbaijan over which the Ottomans had assumed control after the fall of Isfahan in 1135/1722.

Nādir's expulsion of Ashraf from Isfahan threw the latter's cousin Mīr Ḥusayn, the Ghilzay ruler of Qandahar, into a state of panic. At the beginning of 1142/1730, he sent messengers to Herat encouraging the Abdālī to revolt against Nādir and, in so doing,

¹⁵⁷ Muḥammad Kāzīm, *ʿĀlam-ārā-yi Nādirī*, ed. Riyāḥī, 1:100–1; Sulṭān Muḥammad, *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī*, 80–81.

¹⁵⁸ On the Battle of Mihmāndūst, see Mahdī Khān, *Jahāngushā-yi Nādirī*, 95–99; Sulṭān Muḥammad, *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī*, 80–81; Muḥammad Kāzīm, *ʿĀlam-ārā-yi Nādirī*, ed. Riyāḥī, 1:112–13. For recent studies detailing the battle, see Lockhart, *Nadir Shah*, 36–37; Chahryar Adle, “La bataille de Mehmāndust (1142/1729),” *Studia Iranica* 2, no. 2 (1973):235–41. N.b., in both Anwār's edition of the *Jahāngushā-yi Nādirī* and the *TSu*, the date given for the Battle of Mihmāndūst is 6 Jumādā I 1142/27 November 1729. Lockhart gives an alternate date of Rabīʿ I/September 29, which appears to be derived from the Bombay edition of Mahdī Khān's history (see p. 323 of *Nadir Shah*). The date given in the Anwār edition is likely a typo or mis-transcription, for in the subsequent pages it describes events that took place after Mihmāndūst but before 27 November 1729.

¹⁵⁹ Mahdī Khān, *Jahāngushā-yi Nādirī*, 106–8; Lockhart, *Nadir Shah*, 38–45.

preventing the latter from invading Qandahar. But Allāh Yār Khān, who had concluded a pact with Nādir, was hesitant to revolt. Those Abdālī who favoured aligning themselves with the Ghilzay summoned Zū al-Faqār Khān from Farāh to replace his old rival Allāh Yār Khān. After a three-month civil war, Zū al-Faqār Khān entered Herat on 3 Shawwāl 1142/21 April 1730 and Allāh Yār Khān and his family were banished to Mārūchāq.¹⁶⁰

Soon after establishing himself in Herat, Zū al-Faqār Khān, with 8,000 Abdālī soldiers, marched on Mashhad and, by mid-July, set up camp at Khwāja Rabī'.¹⁶¹ A few days prior to Zū al-Faqār Khān's arrival, Allāh Yār Khān, who had recently been banished from Herat to Mārūchāq, made his way to Mashhad and was welcomed there by Nādir's brother Ibrāhīm Khān. Allāh Yār Khān and Ibrāhīm Khān worked together to repel Zū al-Faqār Khān's invasion of Mashhad. On 13 Muḥarram 1143/29 July 1730, roughly two weeks into the confrontation, and in defiance of Nādir's direct orders to remain in the citadel, Ibrāhīm Khān led a foray on the enemy. Zū al-Faqār Khān and the Abdālī defeated Ibrāhīm Khān's forces, causing the latter to retreat to the citadel in defeat. Nādir was preoccupied with campaigning in Azerbaijan but upon learning of the humiliating defeat suffered by Ibrāhīm Khān, he cut his campaign short and prepared his troops to return to Mashhad.¹⁶²

¹⁶⁰ Mahdī Khān, *Jahāngushā-yi Nādirī*, 131–32; 'Alī Muḥammad Khān, *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i 'ālī-shān*, fols. 55b–56a. Muḥammad Kāẓim, *'Ālam-ārā-yi Nādirī*, ed. Riyāḥī, 1:151–52, suggests this dispute arose because Allāh Yār killed Zū al-Faqār Khān's father Zamān Sulṭān. But most accounts agree that Allāh Yār arrived in Herat from Multan after Zamān Khān's death. It is likely that the account of Muḥammad Kāẓim and/or his informant (*rāwī*) is actually a garbled account of Zamān Khān's death at the hands of one of Allāh Yār's family members.

¹⁶¹ During this campaign, Zū al-Faqār Khān was accompanied by an astrologer from Tūn, Abū al-Qāsim Munajjam Tūnī; see Muḥammad Kāẓim, *'Ālam-ārā-yi Nādirī*, ed. Riyāḥī, 1:154.

¹⁶² Muḥammad Kāẓim, *'Ālam-ārā-yi Nādirī*, ed. Riyāḥī, 1:150–157; Mahdī Khān, *Jahāngushā-yi Nādirī*, 131–35; 'Alī Muḥammad Khān, *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i 'ālī-shān*, fols. 56b–59a; Gandāpūrī, *Tārīkh-i khūrshīd-i jahān*, 148–49. Zū al-Faqār Khān's victory is proudly commemorated in the *TASH*; see Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, ed. Murādōf, 1:12b.

Zū al-Faqār Khan, meanwhile, returned to Herat in Šafar 1143/September 1730. He then dispatched a messenger to Mīr Ḥusayn informing him that he had broken the pact established between Allāh Yār Khān and Nādir and was seeking to form an alliance. Mīr Ḥusayn appeared in person at Isfizār to negotiate with the Abdālī, but the two sides were unable to reach an agreement. It appears one of the reasons why these negotiations failed is that Mīr Ḥusayn agreed to exchange two Safavid princesses for fourteen of his own family members—including the children and wives of his brother Mīr Maḥmūd—who had been held captive by Nādir ever since the latter had expelled Ashraf from Isfahan. For this reason, Zū al-Faqār Khan was compelled to retire to Qandahar.¹⁶³ Nevertheless, he did agree to leave behind several thousand fighters under the command of the celebrated Ghilzay commander, Saydāl Khān Nāširī, to aid the Abdālī in the defense of Herat.¹⁶⁴

Nādir arrived in Mashhad at the end of Rabīʿ II 1143/November 1730. He also sent Allāh Yār Khān Khān to Mārūchāq with supplies and ordered him to prepare to join him on the Herat campaign. In exchange for his support, Nādir promised Allāh Yār Khān the governorship of Herat. Nādir then departed Mashhad on 15 Ramaḍān 1143/24 March 1731 for what was to be an arduous, eleventh month campaign against the Abdālī of Herat.¹⁶⁵ On 4 Shawwāl 1143/11 April 1731, his army encamped at Nuqra where an indecisive battle was

¹⁶³ According to Kamal Khan, during negotiations Ḥusayn Hōtakī demanded that Zū al-Faqār Khān renounce claims over Tarnak and Arghasān but the Abdālī chief refused to accept these terms. See Kamal Khan, *Rise of Saddozais*, 242–43. If negotiations broke down at this point, this does not explain why Mīr Ḥusayn would have left behind Saydāl Khān Nāširī, his most trusted military commander, to aid the Abdālī defense of Herat.

¹⁶⁴ Maḥdī Khān, *Jahāngushā-yi Nādirī*, 143–44; Muḥammad Kāẓim, *ʿĀlam-ārā-yi Nādirī*, ed. Riyāḥī, 1:175–76. Maḥdī Khān notes that Saydāl Khān led 3,000 fighters while Muḥammad Kāẓim gives the more generous number of 12,000.

¹⁶⁵ Other sources and studies that treat this campaign include: Maḥdī Khān, *Jahāngushā-yi Nādirī*, 144–153, 168–201; ʿAlī Muḥammad Khān, *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ʿālī-shān*, fols. 59a–71a; Lockhart, *Nadir Shah*, 52–54; Noelle-Karimi, *The Pearl in Its Midst*, 89–90.

fought with Zū al-Faqār Khān's forces.¹⁶⁶ A series of battles was fought at Takht-i Safar. Zū al-Faqār Khān and his men met Nādir at the fort of Sāq-i Salmān but were defeated and forced to leave their supplies behind before retreating to the citadel of Herat. It was around this time that Allāh Yār Khān arrived from Mārūchāq with an army.¹⁶⁷

On 26 Shawwāl 1143/3 May 1731, Nādir made his way from Nuqra to the Pul-i Malān bridge just south of Herat. He encamped at the village of Dih-i Naw and defeated an Abdālī force there. He was thus able to establish control of west and south of Herat and moved on its east.¹⁶⁸ On 4 Dhū al-Qaʿda 1143/11 May 1731, Nādir feigned an attack from the south to provide an opportunity for his men to set up a base at Karukh, to the east of Herat. On 12 Dhū al-Qaʿda 1143/19 May 1731, he took control of the village of Urdū Khān to the east of Herat and had the city surrounded on the west, south, and east.¹⁶⁹

While the bulk of his forces was encamped at Herat, Nādir sent 3,000 men under the command of Muḥammad Sulṭān Marwī from Mārūchāq to Farāh. After reaching Farāh, Muḥammad Sulṭān did battle with an army led by the governor of Khāsh, Ghulām Muṣṭafā Abdālī. Muḥammad Sulṭān's forces killed Ghulām Muṣṭafā in battle and took over the forts of Khāsh and Kada, located to the southeast of Farāh.¹⁷⁰ After taking these forts, Muḥammad Sulṭān encamped at Khāsh and waited for the arrival of Imām Wirdī Bēg Afshār—the

¹⁶⁶ According to Mahdī Khān, on the night of the battle at Nuqra, Saydal Khān led an attack that put Nādir in peril but in the end was repelled; see Mahdī Khān, *Jahāngushā-yi Nādirī*, 145–46. This version of events is repeated in Lockhart, *Nadir Shah*, 52–53. According to Muḥammad Kāẓim, however, the night attack was led by the Abdālī commander Amān Allāh; Muḥammad Kāẓim, *Ālam-ārā-yi Nādirī*, ed. Riyāḥī, 1:170.

¹⁶⁷ Mahdī Khān, *Jahāngushā-yi Nādirī*, 147–49; ʿAlī Muḥammad Khān, *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ʿālī-shān*, fol. 60b.

¹⁶⁸ Mahdī Khān, *Jahāngushā-yi Nādirī*, 149–50.

¹⁶⁹ Mahdī Khān, *Jahāngushā-yi Nādirī*, 152–53; ʿAlī Muḥammad Khān, *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ʿālī-shān*, fol. 63a.

¹⁷⁰ Mahdī Khān, *Jahāngushā-yi Nādirī*, 149. Muḥammad Kāẓim, *Ālam-ārā-yi Nādirī*, ed. Riyāḥī, 1:180 refers to him as Muḥammad Bēg Marwī; ʿAlī Muḥammad Khān erroneously conflates Muḥammad Sulṭān with Pīr Muḥammad Khān Marwī, another one of Nādir's commanders. See ʿAlī Muḥammad Khān, *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ʿālī-shān*, fol. 61b.

governor of Yazd, Sistan and Kirman—before besieging the citadel of Farāh, which was held by Zū al-Faqār Khān's younger brother 'Alī Mardān Khān.

Nādir intended to dispatch his brother Ibrāhīm Khān, along with military regiments from Khurasan, to Farāh to help blockade its citadel as well. But the latter was sent instead to deal with Kōkalān Turkmen raids in Khurasan and for this reason his arrival in Farāh was delayed. Nādir thus ordered Imām Wirdī Bēg to march with his troops to aid Muḥammad Sulṭān. He also advised Imām Wirdī to await the arrival of a relief force. But in defiance of Nādir's orders, Imām Wirdī moved to Dih-i Naw on 27 Dhū al-Qa'da 1143/3 June 1731 and set up camp there.¹⁷¹ When 'Alī Mardān Khān learned of Imām Wirdī's movement, he led an attack on Muḥammad Sulṭān's forces near Shiblī Kōh and Farāh Rūd. In the ensuing battle, Muḥammad Sulṭān and several of Nādir's commanders were killed. On the third day of battle, the relief force sent by Nādir arrived and inflicted a massive defeat on the Afghans who retreated to the citadel of Farāh. For his disobedience, Imām Wirdī was stripped of his governorship and military command.¹⁷²

When Ibrāhīm Khān finally made his way to Farāh in August, he sent the rebel, Imām Wirdī, to Herat. Then, on 15 Rabī' I 1144/17 September 1731, he marched on the citadel of Farāh and defeated the army of 'Alī Mardān Khān.¹⁷³ He set up camp at the village of Qamar where he began to construct towers and forts. When the defenders of Farāh became aware

¹⁷¹ There are several villages named Dih-i Naw in the Herat and Farāh regions. The Dih-i Naw in question appears to be a reference to the village a few miles west of Rawzāt Bāgh (for which see §6.3, note 100); Adamec, *Historical and Political Gazetteer of Afghanistan*, 3:97.

¹⁷² Mahdī Khān, *Jahāngushā-yi Nādirī*, 154–56; Muḥammad Kāẓim, *Ālam-ārā-yi Nādirī*, ed. Riyāḥī, 1:168–69, 1:180–85. Muḥammad Kāẓim's account shows that Imām Wirdī Bēg was an Afshārī tribesman whose ambitions led him to rebel against his kinsman Nādir. When Ibrāhīm Khān arrived in Farāh, he sent the rebel Imām Wirdī Bēg to Nādir who proceeded to execute him.

¹⁷³ According to Mahdī Khān, after his campaign against the Turkmen, Ibrāhīm Khān joined Nādir at Herat towards the end of Muḥarram 1144/August 1731. Nādir then sent him to Farāh on 1 Ṣafar 1144/15 August 1731. See Mahdī Khān, *Jahāngushā-yi Nādirī*, 157, 166–67.

of Ibrāhīm Khān's activities they advanced on his position but he was able to repel the Afghan attack. Muḥammad Kāẓim indicates that in the course of Ibrāhīm Khān's operations in Farāh, Zū al-Faqār Khān sent a letter to 'Alī Mardān Khān advising him to retreat to Qandahar where they would reunite.¹⁷⁴ One of Mīr Ḥusayn's messengers also arrived in Farāh at around this time to inform 'Alī Mardān Khān of the coming of a relief force.¹⁷⁵ 'Alī Mardān Khān thus made preparations to flee and, under cover of night, he and the Afghans of Farāh secretly made their way towards Qandahar. When Ibrāhīm Khān became aware of their departure, he pursued the fleeing Afghans but was met on the way by Mīr Ḥusayn's army. After a fierce battle, the Afghans retired to Qandahar while Ibrāhīm Khān returned to Farāh and established control over its citadel as well as the territory up to Dilkhāk and Dilārām.¹⁷⁶

Meanwhile back in Herat, on 17 Muḥarram 1144/22 July 1731, Zū al-Faqār Khān left the citadel and battled Nādir's forces to the south of the Harī Rūd but was defeated. Apparently sensing that Nādir would soon overcome Herat, Saydāl Khān departed the citadel and secretly made his way towards Isfizār on the night of 1 Ṣafar 1144/15 August 1731. Discouraged by the defeat of Zū al-Faqār Khān and the defection of Saydāl Khān, the Abdālī sent some of their leaders to Nādir and Allāh Yār Khān to sue for peace. Nādir

¹⁷⁴ According to several accounts, Zū al-Faqār Khān and Aḥmad Khān made their way Qandahar at this point and it is likely that they would have met 'Alī Mardān Khān there. Mīr Ḥusayn apparently imprisoned the brothers. But because Zū al-Faqār Khān and his brothers went to Qandahar of their own volition, it is possible that they were not imprisoned physically but kept under close surveillance as hostages of the Ghilzay ruler.

¹⁷⁵ Mahdī Khān suggests that Mīr Ḥusayn sent 2,000 men under the command of Saydāl Khān. On the other hand, Muḥammad Kāẓim suggests that Mīr Ḥusayn dispatched a certain Nawāb Sardār Khān at the head of 10,000 men; see Mahdī Khān, *Jahāngushā-yi Nādirī*, 168; Muḥammad Kāẓim, *Ālam-ārā-yi Nādirī*, ed. Riyāḥī, 1:199.

¹⁷⁶ According to Mahdī Khān, Ibrāhīm Khān did battle with Mīr Ḥusayn's forces in Ramaḍān 1144/March 1732, which is around the time he asserts Allāh Yār Khān arrived there on his way to Multan. Muḥammad Kāẓim, on the other hand, does not provide dates for these events, but if his account is accurate, this would imply that 'Alī Mardān Khān's flight to Qandahar occurred in ca. March 1732.

accepted this proposal of peace, but when he sent his brother Ibrāhīm Khān to Farāh that same day, the Abdālī imagined he had been sent to stem the advance of an army Mīr Ḥusayn had sent from Qandahar to relieve Herat and they thus reneged on their peace overtures. Nādir then resumed hostilities, but the Abdālī again appeared before him and sued for peace. Nādir displayed clemency and, at their request, appointed Allāh Yār Khān as the governor of Herat. Allāh Yār Khān and the Abdālī leaders were sent to Herat on 18 Ṣafar 1144/21 August 1731. A few days later, Allāh Yār Khān appeared before Nādir with several hundred Abdālī notables and they were awarded gifts. It was agreed that Allāh Yār Khān would be given control of Herat and that Zū al-Faqār Khān and his brother Aḥmad Khān would be expelled to Farāh. At around this time, Zū al-Faqār Khān and Aḥmad Khān joined with Saydāl Khān at Isfizār and they made their way together to Qandahar.¹⁷⁷

The Abdālī in Herat sent an informant named Bātū Khān to notify Nādir that 40,000 Ghilzay were approaching Farāh to aid them. Although this rumor proved to be false, Nādir was suspicious of a secret Abdālī-Ghilzay alliance against him and thus decided to resume hostilities. Allāh Yār Khān appeared before Nādir once again and sued for peace. This time Nādir demanded several Abdālī leaders, including ‘Abd al-Ghanī Alakōzay, remain with him at camp and only then allowed Allāh Yār Khān to return to Herat.¹⁷⁸

On 2 Rabī‘ I 1144/4 September 1731, news arrived that Zū al-Faqār Khān and Saydāl Khān joined forces at Isfizār and were marching on Farāh. Upon receiving this news, Nādir sent the commander Yūsuf Bārakzay and one of his servants to Allāh Yār Khān to issue a stern warning. These messengers returned with news that the Afghans had convinced Allāh Yār Khān to rebel. Nādir thus placed ‘Abd al-Ghanī and a few other Abdālī commanders

¹⁷⁷ Mahdī Khān, *Jahāngushā-yi Nādirī*, 156–58, 302; Mahdī Khān, *Durra-i Nādira*, 286–87; Gandāpūrī, *Tārīkh-i khūrshīd-i jahān*, 155.

¹⁷⁸ Mahdī Khān, *Jahāngushā-yi Nādirī*, 158–59.

under arrest and resumed hostilities.¹⁷⁹ Mahdī Khān does not go into detail as to why Allāh Yār Khān reneged on his pact with Nādir but both Muḥammad Kāzīm and ‘Alī Muḥammad Khān suggest that the Abdālī elders, including their womenfolk, appealed to his sense of pride and chastised him for surrendering their sons and daughters to Nādir as prisoners. In this way, Allāh Yār Khān was shamed into reneging on his pact with Nādir and subsequently swore a sacred oath to fight to the death in defense of Herat and the honor of his confederacy.¹⁸⁰

On 13 Rabī‘ I 1144/15 September 1731, Allāh Yār Khān sent a force under cover of night to Qal‘a-i Safīd and another to Bādghīs, but both were repelled. Mūsā Khān Dūngī was also sent from Chashma-i Qaranful to plunder the dependencies of Bādghīs. Nādir dispatched a force to pursue them while he made his way to the region known as Jibrā’īl. At this time, the Abdālī emerged from the citadel and did battle with Nādir’s forces. Allāh Yār Khān besieged the fort at Darband-i Gāwshīr, but after a few more skirmishes in the area, both armies returned to their respective positions. As these battles were taking place, Nādir sent a group of soldiers to capture Mārūchāq and the relations and property of Allāh Yār Khān located there.¹⁸¹

On 21 Rabī‘ II 1144/23 October 1731, Nādir led an attack on Kabūtar Khān. He also sent a detachment to Qardalī to ambush the Abdālī force there. The Abdālī retreated to a fortress near Karzan where they were surrounded. Nādir’s forces encircled the fortress.

¹⁷⁹ Mahdī Khān, *Jahāngushā-yi Nādirī*, 159.

¹⁸⁰ Muḥammad Kāzīm, *‘Ālam-ārā-yi Nādirī*, ed. Riyāḥī, 1:190–91; ‘Alī Muḥammad Khān, *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān*, fols. 65b–66a.

¹⁸¹ Mahdī Khān, *Jahāngushā-yi Nādirī*, 160–61. According to the *TMA*, over the span of the next thirty-eight days, eighteen pitched battles took place. See ‘Alī Muḥammad Khān, *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān*, fol. 67a.

Allāh Yār Khān emerged from the citadel to do battle. After some maneuvering, the Abdālī were finally able to reach the citadel of Herat but with much difficulty.

Ismāʿīl Khān Ustājīlū was sent to Ūba but he was ambushed and killed by a group of Afghans. Nādir sent a military contingent to Ūba where it defeated an Afghan force.¹⁸²

At the beginning of Rajab 1144/December 1731-January 1732, Allāh Yār Khān sent his Shaykh al-Islam along with a messenger to Nādir's court asking for the Abdālī notables at his court and those besieged at Ūba to be released. In exchange, Allāh Yār Khān agreed to appear before Nādir to surrender. But, according to Mahdī Khān, when Nādir carried out his end of the agreement, Allāh Yār Khān once again reneged on his word.¹⁸³

On 14 Rajab 1144/12 January 1732, another battle was fought in the area between Gāzurgāh and Takht-i Safar. The Abdālī were defeated during this engagement and fled, but Nādir's men were able to capture Ḥamza Khān Fōfalzā'i, one of Allāh Yār Khān's confidants. Nādir used the latter's capture as leverage to convince the Fōfalzā'is/Pōpalzay responsible for defending one of the Herat citadel's gates to open it in exchange for sparing Ḥamza Khān. On 20 Rajab 1144/18 January 1732, Amān Khān Pōpalzay, one of the Abdālī notables, recently had a falling out with Allāh Yār Khān and decided to defect to Nādir's side and agreed to have the gate opened.¹⁸⁴ But when Allāh Yār Khān learned of this plot, he relieved the Pōpalzay of their duties at that gate and had Amān Khān executed. When Nādir learned that his ruse had failed, he, in turn, ordered Ḥamza Khān's execution.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸² Mahdī Khān, *Jahāngushā-yi Nādirī*, 162–63; Muḥammad Kāẓim, *Ālam-ārā-yi Nādirī*, ed. Riyāhī, 1:195–96; ʿAlī Muḥammad Khān, *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ʿālī-shān*, fol. 68a.

¹⁸³ Mahdī Khān, *Jahāngushā-yi Nādirī*, 164. On the other hand, according to ʿAlī Muḥammad Khān, peace was averted because Nādir did not release the Abdālī notables held captive at his court; see ʿAlī Muḥammad Khān, *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ʿālī-shān*, fol. 68b.

¹⁸⁴ Amān Khān appears to be the same Abdālī chief described by Muḥammad Kāẓim variously as Amān Bēg and Amān Allāh Khān; Muḥammad Kāẓim, *Ālam-ārā-yi Nādirī*, ed. Riyāhī, 1:96, 1:100, 1:172–74.

¹⁸⁵ Mahdī Khān, *Jahāngushā-yi Nādirī*, 164–65; ʿAlī Muḥammad Khān, *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ʿālī-shān*, fol. 68b.

Although he did not gain entry into the citadel of Herat, Nādir was still in an advantageous position since, over the course of his eleven-month long campaign, he effected a full blockade of Herat. Famine ensued and the inhabitants could not expect help from Qandahar via Farāh since Ibrāhīm Khān was blocking access. At the beginning of Ramaḍān 1144/February-March 1732, the defenders surrendered and were ordered to leave Herat. Allāh Yār Khān and his confidants were granted permission to return to Multan. Nādir acceded to this request and entered Herat on 7 Ramaḍān 1144/4 March 1732.¹⁸⁶ On the way to Multan, Allāh Yār Khān went to Farāh, which was controlled by Ibrāhīm Khān.¹⁸⁷ The latter left behind Bāqir Khān Lazgī and 1,000 men to govern Farāh before joining Nādir in Herat. On 19 Ramaḍān 1144/16 March 1732, Nādir and his forces set out for Mashhad.¹⁸⁸

The Abdālī in Nādirid Service (1732–47)

In the aftermath of his Herat campaign, Nādir resettled 60,000 Abdālī families in Khurasan. He recruited several thousand Abdālī warriors into his military and many were given positions of rank therein. Most notably, he granted ‘Abd al-Ghanī Alakōzay the title of Khān and elevated him to a rank of seniority over all other Afghan chiefs.¹⁸⁹ Another Abdālī

¹⁸⁶ Mahdī Khān, *Jahāngushā-yi Nādirī*, 164–66; Sulṭān Muḥammad, *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī*, 118; ‘Alī Muḥammad Khān, *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān*, fols. 69a–70a.

¹⁸⁷ ‘Alī Muḥammad Khān indicates that Allāh Yār met Nādir again during his campaign in India in 1151/1738–39 and accompanied him back to Iran. He adds that because Allāh Yār unintentionally withheld information about an assassin who made an attempt on Nādir’s life in 1154/1741, the latter had him poisoned and then sent his body to be buried at Rawzāt Bāgh in Herat. See ‘Alī Muḥammad Khān, *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān*, fols. 72a–73b.

¹⁸⁸ Mahdī Khān, *Jahāngushā-yi Nādirī*, 166–69; Muḥammad Kāẓim, *‘Ālam-ārā-yi Nādirī*, ed. Riyāḥī, 1:184–85, 1:198–99. Shēr Muḥammad Gandāpūrī’s account of Nādir Shāh’s defeat of the Abdālī at Herat, which is based primarily on Mahdī Khān’s chronicle, see Gandāpūrī, *Tārīkh-i khūrshīd-i jahān*, 149–55.

¹⁸⁹ Mahdī Khān, *Jahāngushā-yi Nādirī*, 180; Muḥammad Kāẓim, *‘Ālam-ārā-yi Nādirī*, ed. Riyāḥī, 1:258; Sulṭān Muḥammad, *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī*, 118; Sir John Malcolm, “Translations of Two Letters of Nadir Shah with Introductory Observations in a Letter to the President,” *Asiatic Researches* 10 (1811): 533–34; Naofumi Abe, “Nader Shah and the Afghan Corps,” *Toyo Gakuho: Journal of the Research Department of the Toyo Bunko* 85, no. 4

elevated in rank was Nūr Muḥammad Khān who had helped Pīr Muḥammad Khān, the Nādirid governor of Herat, consolidate control over the province and its dependencies.¹⁹⁰

After capturing Herat and subjugating the Abdālī, Nādir resumed his efforts to regain the former Safavid territories in Iraq and Azerbaijan that had been occupied by the Ottomans since Isfahan fell to the Ghilzay. The Afghan division of Nādir's standing army, in which the Abdālī were strongly represented, swelled in size to upwards of 50,000 soldiers and played a significant role in the successes of these campaigns.¹⁹¹

The Abdālī contingent of the Nādirid army was commanded by ‘Abd al-Ghanī Khān accompanied Nādir Shāh on his march from Mashhad to Isfahan (Ramaḍān 1144–Rabī‘ I 1145/March–September 1732) and then from Isfahan to Iraq (Rabī‘ I 1145–Rajab 1146/September 1732–December 1733). As Nādir's forces gradually crossed the Tigris in late 1732 and early 1733, they engaged in a series of battles with Ottoman forces in and around Baghdad.¹⁹² Of the different ethnic contingents in his military, Nādir seems to have been particularly reliant on the Abdālī who rendered valuable services in these battles.

(2004): 31–33. According to Gandāpūrī, at this time Nādir awarded a certain Ismā‘īl Khān Alakōza’ī b. Bījan Sulṭān, a resident of Zamīndāwar, the governorship of Isfizār; see Gandāpūrī, *Tārīkh-i khūrshīd-i jahān*, 156. However, Gandāpūrī's account, which is not supported by any of the Nādirid chronicles or the Abdālī genealogical histories, is clearly mistaken, since we know from the *TN* that the governorship of Isfizār was awarded to Ismā‘īl Khān Lazgī b. Bījan Sulṭān; see Mahdī Khān, *Jahāngushā-yi Nādirī*, 179. Gandāpūrī's mistake may be attributed to the fact that he erroneously conflates the Lazgīs, a tribal people native to Daghestan, and the Alakōza’ī, an Afghan clan affiliated with the Abdālī confederacy, throughout his work (e.g., pp. 156–66). The confusion apparently stems from the similar spelling of the names Lazgī (which is alternatively spelled Lagzī in the sources) and Alakōza’ī in Persian script.

¹⁹⁰ Muḥammad Kāzīm, *‘Ālam-ārā-yi Nādirī*, ed. Riyāḥī, 1:437–40. Here Muḥammad Kāzīm describes Nūr Muḥammad as the son of Ismā‘īl Bēg Abdālī Dīwān-bēgī. This may be the Nūr Muḥammad Khān ‘Alīzay who replaced ‘Abd al-Ghanī as chief of the Abdālī contingent in Nādir's army.

¹⁹¹ Jonas Hanway remarks on the Abdālī presence in the Afghan section of the Nādirid army, which numbered 50,000 soldiers; see Hanway, *An Historical Account of the British Trade over the Caspian Sea*, 1:171.

¹⁹² Nādir's campaigns in Iraq are treated in: Mahdī Khān, *Jahāngushā-yi Nādirī*, 190–222; Lockhart, *Nadir Shah*, 65–79. Mahdī Khān, unlike Muḥammad Kāzīm, does not give much attention to the role of the Abdālī in this campaign.

Muḥammad Kāẓim gives the particular example of a clash in the vicinity of Yangija between Nādir's men and an army that Aḥmad Pāshā, the Ottoman governor of Baghdad, dispatched under the command of Mamish Pāshā. When Nādir witnessed the Ottoman army gaining the upper hand over his men, he called upon the Abdālī contingent. He threatened them not to hold back lest they be punished and promised them rich rewards if they exerted themselves fully. Consequently, 'Īsā Khān Alakōzay led around 1,000 men into battle and plowed through the Ottoman forces. In a later altercation with the Ottoman army, 'Abd al-Ghanī Khān led a crippling attack on the Ottoman forces. Nādir was very pleased with the help of the Abdālī in driving Aḥmad Pāshā's forces back to Baghdad.¹⁹³ Muḥammad Kāẓim singles out 'Abd al-Ghanī Khān as the recipient of Nādir's largesse, noting that he was granted 3,000 *tūmāns*, robes of honor, and a great deal of booty. Several of 'Abd al-Ghanī Khān's fellow Afghan chiefs were also rewarded with gifts and elevated to the ranks of Commander of a Hundred (*yūz bāshī-garī*) and Commander of a Thousand (*mīn bāshī-garī*). Muḥammad Kāẓim contrasts this treatment of the Abdālī with that of some of Nādir's Kurdish chiefs, who, on account of their cowardice, were bastinadoed and then cast into the Tigris.¹⁹⁴

The Abdālī distinguished themselves in subsequent battles during this campaign as well. This includes a battle that occurred to the north of Baghdad on 6 Ṣafar 1146/18 July 1733 against the army of the Ottoman commander Tōpāl 'Uṣmān Pāshā, who was sent to aid Aḥmad Pāshā. Although this battle was lost to the Ottomans, the Abdālī fought valiantly and became a fixture in the army that led Nādir to victory over Tōpāl 'Uṣmān in their subsequent engagement in Jumādā II 1146/November 1733. It was during this battle that

¹⁹³ Muḥammad Kāẓim, *Ālam-ārā-yi Nādirī*, ed. Riyāḥī, 1:260–63; Abe, "Nader Shah and the Afghan Corps," 35; Muḥammad Kāẓim commemorates 'Abd al-Ghanī Khān's deeds in battle against the Ottomans in a few verses; see the final two lines of his poem on p. 263.

¹⁹⁴ Muḥammad Kāẓim, *Ālam-ārā-yi Nādirī*, 1:265; Mahdī Khān, *Jahāngushā-yi Nādirī*, 199–200.

Tōpāl ‘Uṣmān was killed and decapitated. According to Afghan tradition, ‘Abd al-Ghanī was responsible for Tōpāl ‘Uṣmān’s death and even brought the latter’s head to Nādir.¹⁹⁵ Nādir is said to have been so pleased that he agreed to grant the Abdālī chief any favour he desired. ‘Abd al-Ghanī responded that he desired for the Abdālī Nādir held captive to be freed from bondage, and to be given control of Qandahar. Nādir released the Abdālī captives and agreed to grant ‘Abd al-Ghanī control over Qandahar once it was conquered from the Ghilzay.¹⁹⁶ Although apocryphal, this tradition does reflect the esteem with which Nādir treated his Abdālī soldiers.¹⁹⁷

The Abdālī participated in Nādir’s Daghestan campaign between 1147/1734 and 1148/1736. During this campaign, there were several encounters with Surkhāy Khān Lazgī, the Ottoman-appointed governor of Shīrwān and Daghestan. When Surkhāy Khān refused to relinquish control of Shīrwān as ordered by Aḥmad Pāshā, Nādir advanced to the Kura River on 25 Rabī‘ I 1147/25 August 1734 and caused Surkhāy Khān to flee to the Lazgī stronghold of Qumūq in the mountains of Daghestan. A few days later Nādir took control of the citadel of Shamākhi. On 19 Rabī‘ II 1147/17 September 1734, Nādir and his men departed for Qumūq. After several skirmishes along the way, Nādir’s army reached a deep river about one *farsakh* from Qumūq that was left almost untraversable after Surkhāy Khān destroyed the bridge over it. Nevertheless, Nādir ordered the Abdālī chief ‘Abd al-Ghanī and his men to cross the river. On witnessing this, Surkhāy Khān and his Lazgī fighters who had been waiting on the

¹⁹⁵ Mahdī Khān, *Jahāngushā-yi Nādirī*, 202–4, 216–22; Muḥammad Kāzīm, *Ālam-ārā-yi Nādirī*, ed. Riyāhī, 1:293–94; Sulṭān Muḥammad, *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī*, 119–20; Lockhart, *Nadir Shah*, 74.

¹⁹⁶ Sulṭān Muḥammad, *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī*, 120–21; ‘Alī Muḥammad Khān, *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān*, fols. 71a–71b. Leech records another tradition of ‘Abd al-Ghanī and other leading Abdālī figures making a similar request after their valiant efforts in Nādir’s Daghestan campaign; see Leech, “An Account of the Early Abdalees,” 368–69. Leech’s account is reproduced in: Ḥayāt Khān, *Ḥayāt-i Afghānī*, 128; Zardār Khān, *Ṣawlat-i Afghānī*, 340–41.

¹⁹⁷ ‘Abd al-Karīm recounts a nearly identical version of this tradition; see ‘Abd al-Karīm “Bukhārī,” *Histoire de l’Asie Centrale*, 1:8.

other side of the river, fled to the surrounding mountains. According to Sulṭān Muḥammad, Surkhāy Khān's treasury and possessions that he left behind fell to 'Abd al-Ghanī.¹⁹⁸

The Abdālī chiefs 'Abd al-Ghanī Khān and Mūsā Khān Dūngī were among the *amīrs* of the army that helped Nādir capture Qandahar from the Ghilzay.¹⁹⁹ The campaign began when Nādir departed Isfahan on 17 Rajab 1149/20 November 1736. After passing through Kirman and Sistan, the Nādirid army crossed the Helmand River on 21 Shawwāl 1149/21 February 1737 and proceeded to set up camp in front of the shrine (*mazār*) of Bābā Walī (i.e., Ḥasan Abdāl) located along the banks of the Arghandāb. Mīr Ḥusayn sent a detachment to attack Nādir's camp in the middle of the night, but the Ghilzay force was successfully repelled, apparently with the help of 'Abd al-Ghanī and his men.²⁰⁰ Nādir and his men then proceeded to Qandahar and set up camp to the east of its citadel. Following a brief altercation with the forces of Saydāl Khān at Qalāt-i Ghilzay, Nādir and his reconnaissance forces returned to Qandahar. After several days of scouting, Nādir decided to set up camp at a garden called Surkha Shēr on 8 Dhū al-Ḥijja 1149/9 April 1737. This site, which became fortified and populated over the course of the campaign, was given the name Nādirābād.²⁰¹

¹⁹⁸ Mahdī Khān, *Jahāngushā-yi Nādirī*, 232–39; Sulṭān Muḥammad, *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī*, 119; Lockhart, *Nadir Shah*, 83–95.

¹⁹⁹ Muḥammad Kāẓim, *Ālam-ārā-yi Nādirī*, ed. Riyāḥī, 2:543–44. Muḥammad Kāẓim includes 'Abd al-Ghanī Khān and Mūsā Khān among the eighteen *amīrs* Nādir met with on the eve of the capture of Qandahar. Note that 'Abd al-Ghanī's name is mistranscribed in Riyāḥī's edition of the text.

²⁰⁰ Mahdī Khān, *Jahāngushā-yi Nādirī*, 283–87; Muḥammad Kāẓim, *Ālam-ārā-yi Nādirī*, ed. Riyāḥī, 2:486–88; Lockhart, *Nadir Shah*, 114.

²⁰¹ Mahdī Khān, *Jahāngushā-yi Nādirī*, 287–89; Muḥammad Kāẓim, *Ālam-ārā-yi Nādirī*, ed. Riyāḥī, 2:491–95. In a later section of the *TSu* describing the circumstances surrounding Aḥmad Shāh Durrānī's accession in 1160/1747, Sulṭān Muḥammad notes that this spot was the site of a shrine (*mazār*) of an obscure holy figure named Shēr-i Surkh Bābā. See Sulṭān Muḥammad, *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī*, 122. Ferrier, *History of the Afghans*, 68, refers to this figure as "Sheik Seurk"; this may be a corruption of Shēr-i Surkh. Nādirābād remained the administrative centre of Qandahar province until Aḥmad Shāh Durrānī constructed the new capital city of Aḥmadshāhī (what is today Qandahar city) beginning in 1169/1756. This topic is covered in §6.5.

As with his siege of Herat, Nādir moved to subdue the lands surrounding the citadel—namely, Shahr-i Ṣafā to the northeast, Zamīndāwar to the west, and Baluchistan to the south—before besieging the citadel itself. News of the capture of the town of Bust reached Nādirābād on 3 Muḥarram 1150/3 May 1737. Nādir then sent an army to take Shahr-i Ṣafā, which the Ghilzay notable Amān Allāh Khān governed at the time. Nādir dispatched Mūsā Khān under the command of several thousand troops to Shahr-i Ṣafā. Amān Allāh Khān was killed in battle and the town's fort was apparently captured in a single day.²⁰² Towards the end of May, Nādir also sent Imām Wirdī Bēg Qiriqlū to take Qalāt-i Ghilzay, and its defenders surrendered after two months. Among Imām Wirdī Bēg's captives, according to Mahdī Khān, were Saydāl Khān and Muḥammad, the son of Mīr Ḥusayn Ghilzay. Both were brought before Nādir who ordered Saydāl Khān to be blinded but he showed Muḥammad leniency.²⁰³

In the months prior to his arrival in Qandahar, Nādir sent Pīr Muḥammad Khān to Baluchistan to reduce its local leaders to submission. On 9 Dhū al-Ḥijja 1149/10 April 1737, or the day after setting up camp at Nādirābād, Nādir sent another of his commanders, Muḥammad 'Alī Bēg, to subdue local Balūchī rebels in Shōrābak and to take control of its forts.²⁰⁴ According to Muḥammad Kāẓim, Mūsā Khān Dūngī was also sent to Baluchistan at this time to subdue an Afghan named Sharīm Khān, who may be the Shēr Khān Balūch described by Mahdī Khān.²⁰⁵ This Sharīm Khān or Shēr Khān was an ally of Mīr Ḥusayn Hōtakī who nomadized between Shōrābak and Qalāt-i Ghilzay. Nādir's forces eventually

²⁰² Muḥammad Kāẓim, *Ālam-ārā-yi Nādirī*, ed. Riyāḥī, 2:504–11.

²⁰³ Mahdī Khān, *Jahāngushā-yi Nādirī*, 290–91; Lockhart, *Nadir Shah*, 116. According to Muḥammad Kāẓim, Saydāl Khān was captured in a later battle that occurred at the time when Nādir took the citadel of Qandahar in March 1738. However, the author agrees that Nādir ordered for Saydāl Khān to be blinded. See Muḥammad Kāẓim, *Ālam-ārā-yi Nādirī*, ed. Riyāḥī, 2:548–50.

²⁰⁴ Mahdī Khān, *Jahāngushā-yi Nādirī*, 291–93; Muḥammad Kāẓim, *Ālam-ārā-yi Nādirī*, ed. Riyāḥī, 2:516–19.

²⁰⁵ Muḥammad Kāẓim, *Ālam-ārā-yi Nādirī*, ed. Riyāḥī, 2:504–6, 2:518–19.

killed him near Shōrābak. Over the next several months, Nādir's commanders also obtained the submission of the Brahōy chiefs, Muḥabbat and Ilyās Khān, and several other local leaders in Baluchistan.²⁰⁶

By 9 Shawwāl 1150/30 January 1738, Nādir had established control over much of the lands surrounding Qandahar and began to focus his efforts on laying siege to its citadel. On 2 Dhū al-Ḥijja 1150/23 March 1738, he attacked the Burj-i Dada tower, which was located at a vulnerable section of the citadel, and his soldiers were thus able to gain access to Qandahar. At this time Mīr Ḥusayn retreated to the fortress at the Qaytul Ridge and prepared to surrender. He sent his elder sister, Bībī Zaynab, to negotiate terms with Nādir.²⁰⁷ When Mīr Ḥusayn and his officials—including his senior official Dōst Muḥammad Khān who held the lofty title of I'timād al-dawla—appeared before Nādir with their swords hanging around their necks as tokens of submission, he agreed to pardon them.²⁰⁸ He confiscated Mīr Ḥusayn's property, including his treasury located in the Qaytul Ridge, then sent him and his retinue to Rayy.²⁰⁹ Following Mīr Ḥusayn's departure, 'Abd al-Ghanī was appointed governor

²⁰⁶ Mahdī Khān, *Jahāngushā-yi Nādirī*, 289–90; Muḥammad Kāẓim, *Ālam-ārā-yi Nādirī*, ed. Riyāḥī, 2:495–500, 2:505–6; Lockhart, *Nadir Shah*, 117.

²⁰⁷ Mahdī Khān, *Jahāngushā-yi Nādirī*, 296–302; Sulṭān Muḥammad, *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī*, 95–96. Sulṭān Muḥammad notes that the Mīr Ḥusayn's delegation was sent to Nādir “in the tradition of *nānawāt*” (*bi rasm-i nānawāt*). *Nānawāt* refers to a practice of surrendering or seeking asylum or immunity from another, especially during periods of conflict. On the concept of *nānawāt*, see Raverty, *A Dictionary of the Puk'hto*, 989–90; Anderson, “Doing Pakhtu,” 101–3.

²⁰⁸ Muḥammad Kāẓim suggests that the Ghilzay commander Saydāl Khān Nāshirī was killed at this juncture; see Muḥammad Kāẓim, *Ālam-ārā-yi Nādirī*, ed. Riyāḥī, 2:551. On the other hand, as noted earlier, Mahdī Khān suggests that Saydāl Khān was captured in an earlier battle, brought before Nādir, and blinded. The two accounts may be reconciled if it is assumed that Saydāl Khān was killed after being blinded, though this is not entirely certain.

²⁰⁹ Muḥammad Kāẓim, *Ālam-ārā-yi Nādirī*, ed. Riyāḥī, 2:551; Āzar Bēgdilī, *Ātishkada-i Āzar*, 4:466–67. For an account of the Nādirid conquest of Qandahar, based on the Nādirid sources, also see Sulṭān Muḥammad, *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī*, 90–96; Gandāpūrī, *Tārīkh-i khūrshīd-i jahān*, 158–162; Bēnawā, *Hōtakī-hā*, 141–48. According to Sulṭān Muḥammad, Mīr Ḥusayn and his retinue were banished to Māzandarān and he passed away there of natural causes. But the date Sulṭān Muḥammad gives for Mīr Ḥusayn's death, 10 Sha'bān 1149/14 December 1736, is

of Qandahar while Mūsā Khān was awarded the lesser rank of *ishik-āqāsī* or “chamberlain.” When Mūsā Khān stubbornly refused to serve as ‘Abd al-Ghanī’s subordinate, Nādir had him executed. Several Ghilzay officials, including Dōst Muḥammad Khān, met the same fate.²¹⁰ Nādir ordered the destruction of the citadel of Qandahar (now known as *shahr-i kuhna*, or “the Old City,” i.e., Old Qandahar).

After the capture of Qandahar, Aḥmad Khān and his older brother Zū al-Faqār Khān, who fled to the city during the Nādirid invasion of Herat, were brought before Nādir and the latter treated the brothers with kindness. Most authors agree that Nādir arranged for Zū al-Faqār Khān and Aḥmad Khān to be sent to Māzandarān where they were to be granted a regular stipend from the royal treasury.²¹¹

At around this time many of the Afghan soldiers formerly under Mīr Ḥusayn’s command were enlisted in Nādir’s army while the roughly 60,000 Abdālī families previously settled throughout Khurasan were summoned to Qandahar. As the new governor of Nādirābād, ‘Abd al-Ghanī had jurisdiction of its adjacent lands including Zamīndāwar, Girishk, and Bust.²¹² According to one tradition, the Alakōzay were given the lands of the

clearly erroneous and raises questions about the veracity of his assertion. Muḥammad Kāẓim, who was in Mashhad at the time Qandahar was conquered, learned from messengers that Mīr Ḥusayn was killed near Simnān while on the way to Rayy.

²¹⁰ Muḥammad Kāẓim, *‘Ālam-ārā-yi Nādirī*, ed. Riyāḥī, 2:552.

²¹¹ See Mahdī Khān, *Jahāngushā-yi Nādirī*, 302; Sulṭān Muḥammad, *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī*, 121; ‘Alī Muḥammad Khān, *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān*, fol. 72a; Maḥmūd al-Mūsawī, *Aḥwāl-i aqwām-i chahārgāna-i Afghān*, fols. 7a–7b; Muḥammad Mustajāb, *Gulistān-i Raḥmat*, fols. 97b–98a; Gandāpūrī, *Tārīkh-i khūrshīd-i jahān*, 161. According to the TMA, ‘Alī Mardān Khān, the brother of Zū al-Faqār Khān and Aḥmad Khān, passed away earlier in Qandahar. The author also suggests that ‘Alī Mardān Khān’s son Luqmān Khān was also present at Qandahar at this time. However, according to the TASH, Luqmān Khān was, in fact, the son of Zū al-Faqār Khān; Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, ed. Murādōf, 1:100a. This error notwithstanding, there may be truth to ‘Alī Muḥammad Khān’s assertion that Luqmān Khān was in Qandahar at this juncture.

²¹² Mahdī Khān, *Jahāngushā-yi Nādirī*, 302–3; Imām al-Dīn, *Ḥusayn Shāhī*, fols. 9b–10a; Sulṭān Muḥammad, *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī*, 95–96, 121.

Arghandāb, while the ‘Alīzay were given the fertile lands of Zamīndāwar.²¹³ The city of Nādirābād became the base of operations for ‘Abd al-Ghanī and his son Ḥājī Khān who governed 200,000-300,000 Abdālī, Ghilzay, and other Afghan families. The governor was ordered to have 6,000-7,000 Abdālī soldiers prepared for Nādir’s standing army.²¹⁴

On 2 Ṣafar 1151/21 May 1738, Nādir proceeded to Ghazna on his way to India. When he reached Peshawar, Nādir learned of Ibrāhīm Khān’s death, which took place in ca. Sha‘bān 1151/November-December 1738.²¹⁵ When Nādir returned to Nādirābād on 8 Ṣafar 1153/4 May 1740, he ordered ‘Abd al-Ghanī to march with his Abdālī troops to Shīrwān the following autumn to punish the Lazgīs and thus avenge the death of his brother Ibrāhīm Khān. The Abdālī chief was accompanied by Nādir’s brother-in-law, Faṭḥ ‘Alī Khān Afshārī, as well as the other commanders of Georgia and Azerbaijan.²¹⁶ During this campaign, which lasted from 1153/1741 to 1155/1743, ‘Abd al-Ghanī and the Abdālī helped subdue the Lazgī dissidents and establish control over Shamākhī and its dependencies.²¹⁷

The Nādirid sources say little about ‘Abd al-Ghanī after the Daghestan campaign of 1154-55/1741-43 and so there is some uncertainty about his fate. According to Sulṭān Muḥammad, he died in Nādir’s lifetime and was replaced by Nūr Muḥammad Khān ‘Alīzay.²¹⁸

²¹³ Leech, “An Account of the Early Abdalees,” 469.

²¹⁴ Muḥammad Kāzīm, *‘Ālam-ārā-yi Nādirī*, ed. Riyāḥī, 2:765; Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, ed. Murādōf, 1:14a. Muḥammad Kāzīm gives the number of Abdālī soldiers required as 12,000, while Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī gives the more conservative number of 6,000-7,000. Jonas Hanway notes that in addition to their land-assignments in Qandahar, the Afghans received salaries amounting to “eighty crowns per annum”; see Hanway, *An Historical Account of the British Trade over the Caspian Sea*, 1:171.

²¹⁵ Lockhart, *Nadir Shah*, 129, 169-73.

²¹⁶ Mahdī Khān, *Jahāngushā-yi Nādirī*, 346, 362.

²¹⁷ Mahdī Khān, *Jahāngushā-yi Nādirī*, 365; Muḥammad Kāzīm, *‘Ālam-ārā-yi Nādirī*, ed. Riyāḥī, 2:837-41; Lockhart, *Nadir Shah*, 197-211.

²¹⁸ Sulṭān Muḥammad, *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī*, 122. Abe points out the possibility that ‘Abd al-Ghanī retired by this time; see Abe, “Nader Shah and the Afghan Corps,” 33.

‘Alī Muḥammad Khān, on the other hand, suggests that ‘Abd al-Ghanī was still active at the time of Nādir’s death in 1160/1747 but was killed shortly thereafter by the supporters of Aḥmad Khān Abdālī.²¹⁹ Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī briefly mentions ‘Abd al-Ghanī as being elevated in rank by Nādir but does not discuss how or when he met his end. However he does note that at the time of Nādir’s assassination, Nūr Muḥammad Khān ‘Alīzay had been the commander of the territory of Qandahar (*sardār-i mulk-i Qandāhār*) as well as the chief of the Abdālī contingent in Nādir’s army.²²⁰ This statement seems to support Sulṭān Muḥammad’s assertion that Nūr Muḥammad Khān ‘Alīzay replaced ‘Abd al-Ghanī as chief of the Abdālī at some point before Nādir’s death. Muḥammad Kāẓim does not mention ‘Abd al-Ghanī after the Daghestan campaign.²²¹ But he does refer to ‘Abd al-Ghanī’s son Ḥājji Khān, the governor of Nādirābād, as supplying the Nādirid commander, Muḥammad Riẓā Khān Qiriqlū, with soldiers to help quell the rebellion of Faṭḥ ‘Alī Khān in Sistan in 1159/1746.²²² Based on this evidence, it would appear that by the end of Nādir’s reign: i) ‘Abd al-Ghanī had retired or, more likely, died shortly after the Daghestan campaign; ii) Ḥājji Khān b. ‘Abd al-Ghanī remained governor of Qandahar after his father’s death; and iii) Nūr Muḥammad Khān replaced ‘Abd al-Ghanī as chief of the Abdālī contingent in Nādir’s army.

²¹⁹ ‘Alī Muḥammad Khān, *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān*, fols. 74a–74b. Other versions of ‘Abd al-Ghanī’s death are recounted in ‘Abd al-Karīm “Bukhārī,” *Histoire de l’Asie Centrale*, 1:8–9; Singh, *Ahmad Shah Durrani*, 31n13.

²²⁰ Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, ed. Murādōf, 1:18a, 1:21a–21b; ‘Abd al-Karīm Kashmīrī, *Bayān-i wāqī‘*, 186–87.

²²¹ The last we read of ‘Abd al-Ghanī in Muḥammad Kāẓim’s chronicle is in the passage where the Abdālī leader confronted Nādir about his cruel treatment of the Lazgī women captured in the Daghestan campaign; see Muḥammad Kāẓim, *Ālam-ārā-yi Nādirī*, ed. Riyāḥī, 2:861.

²²² Muḥammad Kāẓim, *Ālam-ārā-yi Nādirī*, ed. Riyāḥī, 3:1184–85.

5.6: Conclusions

While largely under-appreciated by historians, the period spanning the fall of the Safavid dynasty to the coronation of Aḥmad Shāh Durrānī was significant insofar as it was in this period that the Abdālī-Durrānī rose from obscurity to political prominence—first by seizing control over Herat and then by serving as prized soldiers in the army of Nādir Shāh. Both developments would have lasting ramifications, as they would form the bedrock of early Durrānī conceptions of political legitimacy. As discussed further in Chapter 6, on assuming rule, Aḥmad Shāh claimed that the Abdālī-Durrānī were best suited to fill the power vacuum created by Nādir's death since they, as stalwarts of the Nādirid military, represented the backbone of his power. Aḥmad Shāh also asserted authority on account of his noble descent from Zamān Khān, the former Abdālī ruler of Herat.

Although noteworthy for these and related reasons, the pre-Durrānī era should not be construed as a sort of “golden age” of the Abdālī. The brief period of Abdālī rule in Herat was a precarious one marred by internecine conflict among the confederacy's leadership. Moreover, Nādir not only brought an abrupt end to Abdālī rule in Herat but also broke the power of the confederacy's leadership and forced many of its members into military service. A byproduct of these policies was the deep fissures it created within the already divided Abdālī leadership that endured well beyond Nādir's death and that contributed to the contentious political milieu characterizing the early history of the Durrānī state.

In retrospect, one of the beneficiaries of the turmoil faced by the Abdālī confederacy in the post-Safavid period was Aḥmad Khān b. Zamān Khān, the future Aḥmad Shāh. Taking advantage of the tumult resulting from Nādir's death, Aḥmad Khān, with the backing of a core group of Abdālī-Durrānī supporters, was proclaimed shah soon after in Nādirābād. Aḥmad Shāh managed to overcome considerable internal challenges to his rule and succeed

in channeling the energies of the members of the Abdālī-cum-Durrānī confederacy towards his political aims. In this way, he founded an impressive empire that, at its peak, was among the most powerful in Asia, if not the world. But while relatively well-studied and attributed great significance in recent times, many aspects of the life and reign of Aḥmad Shāh, as well as the Durrānī dispensation he inaugurated, particularly in relation to the pre-Durrānī period, remain poorly understood and are thus deserving of deeper investigation.

Chapter 6: Aḥmad Shāh and the Durrānī Dispensation

6.1: The Lineage and Birthplace of Aḥmad Khān Abdālī

The *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, the chronicle commissioned by Aḥmad Shāh Durr-i Durrān, contains a brief section on his lineage (*nasab*) in its opening section. In light of its significance as the earliest documented source on the genealogy of the Sadōzay “line” of the Abdālī-Durrānī confederacy, and one that was produced at the court of the first Durrānī ruler, the relevant section is worth quoting here in full:

The ancestry (*aṣl*) of His Majesty goes back to the leading figures of the exalted Durrānī people (*īl-i jalīl-i Durrānī*) belonging to the Sadōzay segment (*az tira-i Sadōzay*), which has always secured the mandate of leadership over this tribe (*ṭāyifa*) in accordance with the customary law (*bi-dastūr-i tōra*) that is commonly practiced by the Turkic sultans, the Ottoman and Mughal dynasties, and other [rulers] (*salāṭīn-i Turk wa āl-i ‘Uṣmān wa Hindūstān wa ghayra*). [His Majesty] possesses [leadership] as an inheritance (*mīrās*) from his notable ancestors. After His Majesty, through divine grace (*‘ināyat-i ilāhī*), sat upon the felicitous throne of governance and was crowned, he became known as Shāh Durr-i Durrān, while the people of this tribe who loyally rendered services alongside his victorious stirrup became famously known as ‘the exalted Durrānī people.’ Since ancient times, this exalted people occupied summer and winter quarters (*yaylāq-nishīn wa qishlāq-nishīn mī-dāshtand*) in ‘the Established Abode’ (*dār al-qarār*¹) of Qandahar, Zamīndāwar, Ṭōbā², and the mountainous lands from Qarābāgh and Ghaznīn to the heart-pleasing country of Kabul.

The auspicious lineage of the Sublime Emperor is traced to the loins of Sadō in this sequential manner: His Majesty—the Twin of Fate (*qadar-qudrat*), King, Pearl of Pearls (*Shāh Durr-i Durrān*)—is a rosebud from the rose-garden of the khan of sublime stature, Muḥammad Zamān Khān

¹ In Persian historiography, Qandahar is often found written alongside its rhyming epithet, *dār al-qarār*.

² For Ṭōbā as one of the mountain ranges that, along with the Sulaymān, Kākar, and others, traditionally formed part of the “land of the Afghans” or “Afghanistan,” see Arlinghaus, “The Transformation of Afghan Tribal Society,” 15–16, 131–36.

Sadōzay. He, favoured by the incomparable court of the Creator, was the leader of all the exalted families of the Sadōzay clan towards whom deference was incumbent (*ān bar-guzīda-i dargāh-i khāliq-i bī-niyāz az kull-i qabāyil-i jalāyil-i Sadōzay mumtāz wa sarwar-i ān qabāla-i wājib al-i‘zāz būd*) and exercised rule (*salṭanat wa ḥukmrānī mī-namūd*) in the province of Herat. He always showered favour, largesse, and kindness upon the nobles and sagacious, high born and commoners, and he inhabited that region for extended durations. After the lifetime of that paradise-bound khan had expired, his eldest son, Zū al-Faqār Khān, a just khan who was the elder brother of the present king, upheld the standards of governance for several years in Herat and Farāh in utter tranquility. As is recounted in the *Tārīkh-i Nādirī*, he led multiple raids against Mashhad, Sabzawār, and Nīshāpūr, inflicted a crushing defeat upon Nādir’s brother, Ibrāhīm Khān, and captured the artillery, kettle-drums, and all of the supplies at the latter’s camp. He also slew 6,000-7,000 Qizilbash soldiers and elevated the flag of authority (*iqtidār*).

The mercy-dispensing chief, Muḥammad Zamān Khān, was the son and successor of Ḥaẓrat Dawlat Sulṭān...[lacuna].³

This passage is significant in that it briefly outlines Aḥmad Shāh’s historical and genealogical claims to kingship. Yet the lacuna at its conclusion marks an abrupt ending to the section on the paternal lineage of Aḥmad. It occurs at an unfortunate place since the ensuing passages may have cast valuable light on important aspects of Aḥmad’s family background and perhaps even his career prior to becoming king—topics for which very little data survives. As it stands, the obscurity has stirred up debate over even the most basic aspects of Aḥmad’s life, including his place of birth and upbringing as an Abdālī chief.

The above passage from the *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī* affirms Aḥmad was the son of Muḥammad Zamān Khān b. Dawlat Khān, the Abdālī chief who ruled Herat for several years and died there in ca. 1133/1721. In a later passage of his chronicle, Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī

³ This section of the manuscript ends abruptly; see Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, ed. Murādōf, 1:11b–13a.

states that Aḥmad was around ten or twelve years old when Nādir invaded Herat in 1144/1732, which would place his birth somewhere between 1720 and 1722.⁴

Less certain is Aḥmad's place of birth. The prevailing view in the scholarship—championed primarily by members of the Sadōzay community of Multan—is that Aḥmad was born in Multan. In the past, authors like Ghubār and Wakīlī Pōpalza'ī who were writing in Afghanistan have disregarded the Multan thesis and instead argued that he was born in Herat.⁵ Ghubār's main criticism of the Multan thesis is that it lacked supporting evidence. As Amin Tarzi has recently pointed out, it is possible that Ghubār, an author with strong nationalist leanings, sought to place Aḥmad's birth in the territory of present-day Afghanistan rather than in Multan, which is in present-day Pakistan.⁶

Setting aside the question of authorial bias, Ghubār rightly highlights the absence of data about Aḥmad's place of birth in the contemporary sources. Among the earliest sources to explicitly state that Aḥmad was born in Multan is the *Ḥusayn Shāhī*. Many later authors who utilized the *Ḥusayn Shāhī*, or works based upon it, repeated Imām al-Dīn's assertion that Aḥmad was born in Multan.⁷ But a close analysis of the *Ḥusayn Shāhī*, and its author, Imām al-Dīn's, imprecise knowledge of Aḥmad's lineage, gives reason to doubt this conclusion. At the beginning of the work, Imām al-Dīn provides a cursory overview of Aḥmad's lineage, implying that 'Abd Allāh b. Ḥayāt and the latter's son Muḥammad Zamān Khān relocated

⁴ Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, ed. Murādōf, 1:14a.

⁵ Ghubār, *Aḥmad Shāh Bābā-yi Afghān*, 35–41; Mīr Ghulām Muḥammad Ghubār, *Afghānistān dar masīr-i tārikh*, vol.1 (Kabul: Dawlat-i Maṭba'a, 1967), 354; Wakīlī Pōpalza'ī, *Timūr Shāh Durrānī*, 1:24n; Wakīlī Pōpalza'ī, *Aḥmad Shāh*, 9–10.

⁶ Tarzi, "Tarikh-i Ahmad Shahi," 85–86.

⁷ 'Abd al-Karīm 'Alawī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad*, fac. ed., 5–6; Fayz Muḥammad, *The History of Afghanistan*, 1:12; Singh, *Ahmad Shah Durrani*, 15–16; Kamal Khan, *Rise of Saddozais*, 183–84; Durrani, *Multan under the Afghans*, 34.

from Multan to Herat and ruled there.⁸ In the same passage he refers to ‘Abd Allāh as the grandfather (*jadd*) and to Asad Allāh as the father (*padar*) of Aḥmad.⁹ Yet in a later passage, Imām al-Dīn contradictorily describes Aḥmad as the son of Muḥammad Zamān.¹⁰ It appears that in the first instance the author mistakenly conflated Aḥmad’s father Muḥammad Zamān with one of ‘Abd Allāh’s sons, likely Asad Allāh, both of whom resided in Multan before relocating to Herat. The conflicting data in the *Ḥusayn Shāhī* likely stems from Imām al-Dīn’s reliance on divergent traditions about the Abdālī that were in circulation during his lifetime. In fact, the author explicitly states that “some people say” (*ba‘zī mī-gūyand*) Aḥmad was born in Multan, implying that there was a difference of opinion on the matter.¹¹

It is generally acknowledged that Aḥmad was born in ca. 1133/1721, or around the time his father, Muḥammad Zamān Khān, died in Herat, the province he ruled over briefly. The conundrum revolves around the unanswered question: Why was Aḥmad born in Multan while his father was in Herat? Authors who favour the Multan thesis suggest that Aḥmad was born in Multan and relocated from there to Herat but they do not provide any details as to when and how. As Singh has pointed out, the tradition of Aḥmad being born in Multan “can be correct only on the assumption that, on account of the troubled times in Herat, his

⁸ Imām al-Dīn, *Ḥusayn Shāhī*, fols. 7a–8b. This passage may be the source of ‘Alī Muḥammad Khān’s claim that Zamān Khān joined Ḥayāt Khān in Multan and that the latter sent him and ‘Abd Allāh from Multan to Qandahar. For more on Ḥayāt Khān and his relocation to Multan, refer to §5.1.

⁹ Imām al-Dīn, *Ḥusayn Shāhī*, fol. 8a.

¹⁰ Imām al-Dīn, *Ḥusayn Shāhī*, fol. 11a. Ghubār made note of this inconsistency in the *ḤSh* long ago; see Ghubār, *Aḥmad Shāh Bābā-yi Afghān*, 36–37. In a later section of the *ḤSh* (fol. 184a), Imām al-Dīn describes Asad Allāh Khān b. ‘Abd Allāh Khān (on whom see §5.1, §5.3, §5.4) as the brother of Aḥmad Shāh’s father, Zamān Khān, again implying that Aḥmad Shāh was a grandson of the Abdālī chief ‘Abd Allāh Khān. But many sources, including the *TASH*, clearly indicate that Aḥmad Shāh’s father, Zamān Khān, was the son of Dawlat Khān, and so Imām al-Dīn’s assertion should be rejected.

¹¹ The complete sentence reads: *ba‘zī mī-gūyand ki tawallud-i ān gītī-sitān nīz dar Multān shuda*. See Imām al-Dīn, *Ḥusayn Shāhī*, fol. 11a.

mother was sent to Multan for child-birth.”¹² In *Rise of Saddozais*, Kamal Khan took Singh’s suggestion that Aḥmad may have been born after his father’s death a step further by declaring that, shortly after Zamān Khān’s death, Aḥmad’s pregnant mother went to Multan and gave birth to him there. Kamal Khan even includes photographs of the building that bears a plaque indicating it was the place of Aḥmad’s birth.¹³ But the existence of the plaque, which Kamal Khan notes was only installed later, during the period of British rule in Multan, is not in itself proof of Aḥmad’s birth there. It is also quite telling that the dates the plaque gives for Aḥmad Shāh’s reign, A.D. 1747–1773, are inaccurate since we know from contemporary sources like the *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī* that he passed away in 1186/1772.¹⁴

Notwithstanding such elaborate explanations, conclusive evidence in support of the Multan thesis remains elusive. If we look beyond the sketchy account given in the *Ḥusayn Shāhī*, there is little reliable evidence of Aḥmad’s birth in Multan. Works dedicated to the Sadōzay of Multan, like the *Zubdat al-akhbār* and *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān*, do not mention Aḥmad’s birth there.¹⁵ In fact, the bulk of sources dating from the lifetime of Aḥmad Shāh point to Herat as his birthplace.¹⁶ Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, for instance, who mentions Zamān Khān’s rule in Herat and Aḥmad’s upbringing in Khurasan, says nothing of his birth in

¹² Singh, *Aḥmad Shah Durrani*, 15n1; Kamal Khan, *Rise of Saddozais*, 183.

¹³ According to Kamal Khan, after migrating to Multan in 1682, Zamān Khān took up residence in the home of his maternal uncle Jalāl Khān Sadōzay (Za‘farān Khēl) and Aḥmad was born there. Two images of the structure that bears the plaque denoting Aḥmad’s birth there can be found facing pp. 184 and 185. On the other hand, A. M. K. Durrani suggests Aḥmad was born in the residence of Zāhid Khān Sadōzay (Mawdūd Khēl) whose mother was Jalāl Khān’s daughter; see Durrani, *Multan under the Afghāns*, 41; Dasti, *Multan*, 197.

¹⁴ Similar problems associated with the TMA’s assertion that Zamān Khān resided for a time in Multan have been treated in §5.1.

¹⁵ The British Library manuscript of the TMA includes an account of Aḥmad’s career but does not mention his birth in Multan. Neither Kamal Khan nor A. M. K. Durrani cites the TMA when referring to Aḥmad’s birth in Multan. The lack of supporting evidence in the TMA, combined with conflicting data Kamal Khan and Durrani give about the site of Aḥmad’s birth, raises uncertainty about the Multan thesis.

¹⁶ Ghubār, *Aḥmad Shāh Bābā-yi Afghān*, 35–41.

Multan. Further indication that Aḥmad's birth occurred in the Herat region may be found in another contemporary source, the *Shāhnāma-i Aḥmadī* by Niẓām al-Dīn “Ishrat”¹⁷ from the town of Siyālkōt in the Punjab, which includes the following verses of poetry:

Since through the Creator's cloud of beneficence
Muḥammad Zamān Khān had become bountiful

The lifeless mountains and plains of Herat
Were again restored through the water of life

chū az abr-i iḥsān-i parwardigār
Muḥammad Zamān Khān shuda māya-dār

zamīn murda-i kōh o dasht-i Harāt
*digar tāza-jān shud zi āb-i ḥayāt*¹⁸

The inclusion of this verse in the section on Aḥmad Shāh's birth (*tawlid*) would indicate that the bounty (*māya*) mentioned therein is reference to none other than Zamān Khān's son, Aḥmad, whom the poet describes as the product of the water of life (*āb-i ḥayāt*)—often used as a metaphor for semen—that is responsible for giving new life to what had been the “lifeless” land of Herat. That this verse is, indeed, a reference to Aḥmad is confirmed a few lines later where Niẓām al-Dīn writes about Zamān Khān:

His throne was more splendid than any other ruler's
Because Aḥmad possessed night-illuminating radiance

His breast was happy on account of this budding rose [i.e., Aḥmad]
While the hearts of his enemies bore the brand [of sorrow] like the tulip

¹⁷ Not to be confused with Mīrzā ‘Abd al-Hādī Lārī, a *munshī* at the Durrānī court who also composed poetry under the penname “Ishrat.” See below for further details on Mīrzā ‘Abd al-Hādī.

¹⁸ Siyālkōtī, *Shāhnāma-i Aḥmadī*, fol. 132a.

zi har tāj-war takht-i firūza dāsht
ki Aḥmad chirāgh-i shab-afrūz dāsht

az īn tāza gul sīna-ash shād būd
dil-i khaṣm-i ū lāla-sān dāgh būd

In continuing the imagery of Herat being given renewed vitality on account of Aḥmad's auspicious birth, Niẓām al-Dīn likens his patron to a budding rose who was a source of happiness for Zamān but the cause of sorrow and grief for his enemies.

What is noteworthy about early Durrānī-era sources such as the *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī* and *Shāhnāma-i Aḥmadī* is that their authors repeatedly link Aḥmad to Herat and neglect to mention his birth in Multan.¹⁹ Indeed, the majority of works composed by contemporary or near-contemporary authors like Ghulām Ḥusayn Khān, Abū al-Ḥasan Gulistāna, ‘Abd al-Karīm Kashmīrī, Alexander Dow and others refer to Aḥmad as a native resident of Herat.²⁰ The Herat thesis is supported by an apocryphal account related by Leech that may derive from the manuscript he consulted of the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī*. According to it, when Allāh Yār Khān, the former Abdālī ruler of Herat, killed his rival Zamān Khān as well as his sons in a blood-feud, Zamān Khān's wife—who is unnamed in the account but who we know from other sources was named Zarghūna—escaped with her infant son Aḥmad and took him

¹⁹ Of the various authors who subscribe to the Multan thesis, only Singh made use of the *Shāhnāma-i Aḥmadī*. However, he did not discuss the poem's verses treating the subject of Aḥmad Shāh's birth.

²⁰ Ghulām Ḥusayn Khān refers to Aḥmad as being “among the residents of the province of Herat” (*az jumla-i ra‘āyā-yi dār al-salṭanat-i Harāt*) while Gulistāna and Kashmīrī describe him as an “inhabitant of Herat” (*mutawaṭṭin-i Harāt*). Ghulām Ḥusayn Khān, *Siyar al-muta‘akhhirīn*, 2:15; Gulistāna, *Mujmal al-tawārikh*, ed. Mudarris-Raẓawī, 58–59; ‘Abd al-Karīm Kashmīrī, *Bayān-i wāqī‘*, 185; Dow, *The History of Hindostan*, new ed., 2:442. An exception is the *Fawā'id al-ṣafawiyya*, which suggests that Aḥmad's birth took place in Qandahar. However, the account given in this work by Abū al-Ḥasan Qazwīnī is in many places historically inaccurate and there is little reason to take this assertion seriously; see Abū al-Ḥasan Qazwīnī, *Fawā'id al-ṣafawiyya*, 159.

to Ḥājji Ismā‘īl ‘Alīzay, who is described as the governor-general (*bēglarbēg*) of Herat.²¹ After Zarghūna agreed to marry one of her daughters to Ḥājji Ismā‘īl, the latter left Aḥmad to the care of his own *pīr*, or spiritual master, Mullā ‘Usmān, a local Alakōzay *ākhūnd*, or religious instructor, who secretly raised Aḥmad in Sabzawār (also known as Isfizār) and Farāh.²²

This account of the marriage transaction between Aḥmad’s mother Zarghūna and Ḥājji Ismā‘īl is not without its problems. For one, the suggestion that Allāh Yār killed Zamān seems unlikely since Allāh Yār did not rule Herat until several years after Zamān’s death, and it is more likely that another of ‘Abd Allāh’s many sons is meant. The account also suggests that Allāh Yār killed all of Zamān’s sons save for Aḥmad, though we know of at least two other sons, Zū al-Faqār and ‘Alī Mardān, who survived Allāh Yār’s brief period of rule in Herat. Moreover, the status of Ḥājji Ismā‘īl ‘Alīzay as *bēglarbēg* of Herat is not confirmed in the sources.²³ Notwithstanding the problems posed by this account, it is one of many sources that hint at Aḥmad’s birthplace in Herat.

²¹ Aḥmad Shāh’s mother was an Alakōzay woman named Zarghūna. Sulṭān Muḥammad notes that she was alive when Aḥmad Shāh built his new capital, Aḥmadshāhī (present-day Qandahar), in 1169/1756 but she apparently died soon thereafter and was buried in the largely Alakōzay populated village of Kōhak, west of Qandahar; Sulṭān Muḥammad, *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī*, 143; Ghubār, *Aḥmad Shāh Bābā-yi Afghān*, 23–26. A reference to Zarghūna is found in Gulistāna, *Mujmal al-tawārīkh*, ed. Mudarris-Raḥawī, 110. On the spelling of her name in this work, see p. 25 of Ghubār’s study. Kamal Khan notes that Zarghūna was the daughter of Khālū Khān Alakōzay, which would make her the sister of ‘Abd al-Ghanī, the Abdālī commander who became one of Nādir’s favourites; see Kamal Khan, *Rise of Saddozais*, 183.

²² Leech, “An Account of the Early Abdalees,” 467; Ḥayāt Khān, *Ḥayāt-i Afghānī*, 127; Ghubār, *Aḥmad Shāh Bābā-yi Afghān*, 39.

²³ Perhaps neighbouring Sabzawār or Farāh was meant, since Ḥājji Ismā‘īl is alleged to have left Aḥmad there in the care of Mullā ‘Usmān. It is also possible that Ḥājji Ismā‘īl served as *bēglarbēg* or in some other official capacity in Herat after Nādir took control of Herat from the Abdālī in 1144/1732, since, as noted in §5.5, ‘Alīzay commanders did help consolidate Nādirid authority in the province at this time. That Ḥājji Ismā‘īl was on good terms with Nādir is indicated in an anecdote recounted by Leech according to which he interceded on behalf of Aḥmad and his brother Zū al-Faqār and secured the safety of both after the Nādirid conquest of Qandahar in 1738; see Leech, “An Account of the Early Abdalees,” 469.

The Herat thesis is further corroborated by another contemporary work, Ḥāfiẓ Gul Muḥammad Marghuzī's *Aḥmadshāhī shah-nāma*.²⁴ This versified account of Aḥmad Shāh's reign explicitly notes that ruler's birth took place in "Khurasan," which at the time would have included the provinces of Herat and Farāh but certainly not the Punjabi city of Multan.²⁵ These examples show that the Multan thesis is not supported by the bulk of writings predating the *Ḥusayn Shāhī*, which, for reasons already discussed, should not be regarded as an authoritative source on Aḥmad Shāh's early life.²⁶ The fact that numerous sources composed in the ruler's lifetime consistently connect him in his youth to Herat justifies the stance of Ghubār and others that Aḥmad Shāh was, in fact, born in the Herat region, around the time his father passed away and when the Abdālī leadership still exercised authority over the province.

²⁴ A manuscript of the *Aḥmadshāhī shah-nāma*, which was completed in ca. 1174/1761, is preserved in the British Library. Details about the work may be gleaned from the catalogue of Blumhardt and MacKenzie and the preface to the recently published critical edition of the text; see Blumhardt and MacKenzie, *Catalogue of Pashto Manuscripts*, 48; and Ḥāfiẓ Gul Muḥammad Marghuzī, *Aḥmadshāhī shah-nāma*, ed. 'Abd al-Shakūr Rashād (Qandahar: 'Allāma Rashād Academy, 1387 H.sh./2008), *bā'* 1–*bā'* 12, *jīm* 1–*jīm* 29.

²⁵ Marghuzī, *Aḥmadshāhī shah-nāma*, 22.

²⁶ Ghubār's assertion that the author of the *Mir'āt al-ashbāh*, Muḥammad Ḥasan (sic), was a "contemporary" (*mu'āṣir*) of Aḥmad Shāh, appears erroneous; see Ghubār, *Aḥmad Shāh Bābā-yi Afghān*, 35n1. It is apparent that Ghubār did not consult the *Mir'āt al-ashbāh*, which was commissioned by the last Mughal emperor, Abū Zafar Muḥammad Bahādur Shāh II (r. 1253–74/1837–57), and completed at Delhi by Muḥammad Fakhr al-Dīn Ḥusayn in 1267/1851. It thus falls in line with a series of works written after the *ḤSh* that suggest Aḥmad Shāh was born in Multan. For further details on the *Mir'āt al-ashbāh*, see Rieu, *Catalogue of the Persian Manuscripts*, 1:285a/b.

6.2: The Early Life and Career of Aḥmad as Abdālī Khān

Aḥmad Khān's Precarious Upbringing

The account in the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* suggests that Aḥmad's upbringing in the Herat region was precarious.²⁷ On account of the clan rivalries that intensified after Zamān Khān's death in ca. 1133/1721, Aḥmad appears to have been raised in Sabzawār and Farāh. According to Mahdī Khān, Aḥmad was with his eldest brother, Zū al-Faqār Khān, during the latter's engagement against Nādir Shāh in the summer of 1143/1731, when he would have been between 9 and 11 years old.²⁸ Mahdī Khān does not provide further details but his statement indicates that Aḥmad was likely in the care of Zū al-Faqār when a group of Abdālī invited him from Shōrābak in the mid-1720s to rule Herat. In the autumn of 1143/1731, with Herat surrounded by Nādir's army, Zū al-Faqār, Aḥmad, and their brother, 'Alī Mardān, who had been governing Farāh, fled to Qandahar. The brothers remained in the custody of the Ghilzay ruler, Mīr Ḥusayn Hōtakī, until Nādir's conquest of Qandahar in 1150/1738.

The foregoing analysis indicates that Aḥmad spent much of his youth with his family in Herat, Farāh, Qandahar and adjoining regions. However, practically no information has survived in the sources about the early stages of his life. The obscurity surrounding Aḥmad's upbringing has given rise to much speculation and, in some cases, blatant misinformation. An example of the latter can be detected in a brief passage of the *Shāhnāma-i Aḥmadī* that touches upon the topic of Aḥmad's youth, where the poet Nizām al-Dīn writes:

Following two years of fighting night and day
[Nādir] demanded [Zamān's] son be surrendered to him as hostage

²⁷ Singh recounts the account of Aḥmad's activities in Herat but does not bother to reconcile it with his supposition that he was born in Multan; see Singh, *Aḥmad Shah Durrani*, 15–16.

²⁸ Mahdī Khān, *Jahāngushā-yi Nādirī*, 158–59, 302.

bi-jang-i shab o rūz ba‘d az dū sāl
pisar kh^wāst az way bi-kh^wūd yarghamāl

...

Joseph was separated from Jacob and left
 Placing faith in God’s will as he departed

zi Ya‘qūb Yūsufjudā mānd o raft
*qadam bar rizā-yi khudā mānd o raft*²⁹

This passage of the *Shāhnāma-i Aḥmadī* is illustrative of the distortion that exists in many of the primary sources concerning Aḥmad Shāh’s early life. Namely, these verses suggest that Aḥmad entered Nādir’s service after his campaign in Herat between 1143/1731 and 1144/1732. But the account given by Niẓām al-Dīn is anachronistic, for we know that Zamān had passed away several years earlier and could not have surrendered his son to Nādir. In fact, it was Zamān’s son, Zū al-Faqār, whom Nādir battled during his campaigns against Abdālī-ruled Herat. We also know from multiple sources that Aḥmad did not enter the service of Nādir at this juncture since he and his brother Zū al-Faqār fled to Qandahar during the Nādirid campaign against Herat and they remained in that city until 1150/1738.³⁰

Niẓām al-Dīn’s ultimately ahistorical account may have derived from a hasty reading of an identical description of Aḥmad’s time in Nādir’s service found in the beginning of the *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*. In the passage in question, Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī treats similar topics, including Zamān’s rule in Herat, Nādir’s invasion of Herat and Qandahar, and the enlistment of many Abdālī-Durrānī notables, including Aḥmad, at Nādir’s court.³¹ The author even uses

²⁹ Siyālkōtī, *Shāhnāma-i Aḥmadī*, fol. 132a.

³⁰ Leech recounts an anecdote according to which, after the capture of Qandahar, Ḥājji Ismā‘il brought Aḥmad before Nādir who is said to have looked upon him with great favour; see Leech, “An Account of the Early Abdalees,” 469.

³¹ Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, ed. Murādōf, 1:14a.

the same terminology, namely, *yūrqa-māl*, a variant of *yarghamāl*—a word that translates roughly as “hostage” and that refers to Nādir’s practice of keeping family members of leading figures as hostages to ensure their loyalty.³²

The similarities suggest that Niẓām al-Dīn, who knew Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī personally, likely consulted the aforesaid passage from the *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī* for his project. As the passage in question is brief, laconic, and does not dwell on Zamān’s relationship with Aḥmad, it leaves plenty of room for interpretation. Niẓām al-Dīn seems to have inferred from it that Aḥmad entered Nādir’s service during the latter’s campaign against Herat. In claiming that Aḥmad was separated from Zamān, Niẓām al-Dīn was apparently less concerned with historicity than with incorporating the trope of Joseph’s separation from his father Jacob into his poem. His assertion that Aḥmad entered Nādir’s service during the latter’s Herat campaign should not be taken literally, for even the Nādirid chronicles agree that Aḥmad entered Nādir’s service after the conquest of Qandahar.

Aḥmad in the Service of Nādir Shāh

Certain sources, including the anonymous *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī* (written about the Mughal emperor, Aḥmad Shāh, r. 1161–67/1748–54) and Ghulām ‘Alī Āzād’s *Khizāna al-‘āmira*, suggest that, after the Nādirid conquest of Qandahar in 1150/1738, Aḥmad accompanied Nādir on his subsequent invasion of the Mughal capital of Delhi.³³ But while this assertion

³² While Dihkhudā asserts that the term *yarghamāl* is of Turkic origin, the Turkologist Gerhard Doerfer suggests that this word is of uncertain etymology; see Dihkhudā, *Lughat-nāma*, 14:21016; and Doerfer, *Türkische und Mongolische Elemente im Neupersischen*, 4:150–51.

³³ Sarkar and, following him, Singh cites the “Mughal” *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī* as a source for the assertion that Aḥmad was in the retinue of Nādir during the India campaign; see Sarkar, *Fall of the Mughal Empire*, 1:112n. As Singh notes, a similar version of events is found in the *Khizāna-i ‘āmira* and the *Ma’āsir al-umarā’*; see Ghulām ‘Alī Āzād, *Khizāna-i ‘āmira*, ed. Nīkūbakht and Bēg, 128; Awrangābādī, *The Ma’āsir al-umarā’*, ed. ‘Abd al-Raḥīm and Ashraf ‘Alī, 2:715–22. For more details on the “Mughal” *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, see Elliot, *The History of India*, 8:104–23.

offers an early precedent for Aḥmad's numerous invasions of India during his reign as shah, it contradicts other primary sources indicating that, after his conquest of Qandahar, Nādir sent Aḥmad with his brother Zū al-Faqār to Māzandarān.³⁴ For his part, Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī does not mention Aḥmad accompanying Nādir to India but instead simply states that Aḥmad and his relatives were among the various Abdālī-Durrānī families that Nādir resettled throughout Khurasan;³⁵ so while it is possible that he accompanied Nādir to Delhi and then settled in Māzandarān, the conflicting data and lack of evidence gives reason to doubt the veracity of the anecdotes associating Aḥmad with the Nādirid invasion of Delhi.

Although *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī* offers few details about Aḥmad after Nādir relocated him to Khurasan, information drawn from early Durrānī-era sources suggests he remained based in Māzandarān. Such sources include the *Tārīkh-i Shāh Walī Khān wazīr*³⁶ attributed to Aḥmad's grand wazīr, Shāh Walī Khān Bāmīzay. This work indicates that during the reign of Nādir Shāh, Shāh Walī Khān and around one hundred fellow Bāmīzay tribesmen from the Qandahar region went to Māzandarān in order to serve under Aḥmad's command.³⁷ It also suggests that Aḥmad's first wife³⁸ travelled between Mashhad and Māzandarān and gave birth to Aḥmad's eldest son, Tīmūr, in one of these two places.³⁹

³⁴ Mahdī Khān, *Jahāngushā-yi Nādirī*, 302; Imām al-Dīn, *Ḥusayn Shāhī*, fols. 10a–10b; 'Alī Muḥammad Khān, *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i 'ālī-shāh*, fol. 72a; Sulṭān Muḥammad, *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī*, 121; Maḥmūd al-Mūsawī, *Aḥwāl-i aqwām-i chahārgāna-i Afghān*, fols. 7a–7b; Muḥammad Mustajāb, *Gulistān-i Raḥmat*, fol. 98a.

³⁵ Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, ed. Murādōf, 1:77b. The author suggests Nādir relocated the [Abdālī-]Durrānī to Khurasan “in order to bolster his authority” (*barā-yi mazīd-i i'tabār-i kh"ud*). In other words, the Abdālī presence in Khurasan strengthened his base of power there.

³⁶ A manuscript of the *Tārīkh-i Shāh Walī Khān wazīr* was, as of the mid-twentieth century, located in the library of Afghanistan's Ministry of Culture and Information in Kabul; see Wakīlī Pōpalza'i, *Tīmūr Shāh Durrānī*, 1:2. As I have not had access to an original copy of the work, reference herein will be made to information from this work as reproduced by Wakīlī Pōpalza'i in *Tīmūr Shāh Durrānī* and *Aḥmad Shāh*.

³⁷ Wakīlī Pōpalza'i, *Aḥmad Shāh*, 18; Wakīlī Pōpalza'i, *Tīmūr Shāh Durrānī*, 2:336.

³⁸ The exact identity of this wife is not known. According to later authors like Elphinstone and Ḥayāt Khān, she was the daughter of one of the chiefs of the Arab community residing in the district of Bihsūd in Jalālābād in

That Aḥmad spent his initial years in Nādir's service in Māzandarān is supported by an anecdote recounted in the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i 'ālī-shān*. According to 'Alī Muḥammad Khān, Aḥmad was enlisted in Nādir's army in 1155/1742 when his brother Zū al-Faqār passed away in Māzandarān.⁴⁰ At this time the leader of the Abdālī contingent in Nādir's army was 'Abd al-Ghanī Khān Alakōzay. Aḥmad asked Nādir for ten men from this contingent to help him guard the royal harem. When Nādir ordered 'Abd al-Ghanī to supply Aḥmad with ten cavalymen, the Alakōzay chief sent ten "incompetent men" (*ādam-i nā-kāra*). Aḥmad complained to Nādir that, of the 10,000 Abdālī under his command, 'Abd al-Ghanī had provided him ten of the least capable. He then requested permission to choose the men himself. Nādir consented and among the ten Abdālī tribesmen Aḥmad handpicked to serve him were Bagī Khān [Sāliḥzay-Bāmīzay], Jahān Khān Pōpalzay, and 'Abd Allāh Khān Ayyūbzay [Pōpalzay].⁴¹ These three men—each of whom, like Aḥmad, belonged to the Pōpalzay clan—would go on to become fixtures in the Durrānī patrimonial household. Bagī Khān was elevated to the supreme office of *ashraf al-wuzarā'* and renamed Shāh Walī Khān;⁴²

eastern Afghanistan; see Elphinstone, *An Account of the Kingdom of Caubul*, 322; Ḥayāt Khān, *Ḥayāt-i Afghānī*, 446; also see Ghubār, *Aḥmad Shāh Bābā-yi Afghān*, 60–61; Wakīlī Pōpalza'i, *Timūr Shāh Durrānī*, 1:24n3; and Aḥmad 'Alī Kōhzhād, *Rijāl wa rūyādādhā-yi tārikhī: Mushtamil bar chihil wa shash maqāla* ([Kabul]: Anjuman-i Tārikh, n.d.), 133.

³⁹ The *Tārikh-i Shāh Walī Khān wazīr* does not specify the exact place of Timūr Shāh's birth but, as Wakīlī Pōpalza'i points out, there is reason to believe that it may have occurred in the province of Māzandarān; see Wakīlī Pōpalza'i, *Timūr Shāh Durrānī*, 1:24–27. On the other hand, Elphinstone suggests that Timūr Shāh was born in Mashhad in December 1746; see Elphinstone, *An Account of the Kingdom of Caubul*, 558.

⁴⁰ The TMA is among the few sources that offers any details concerning Zū al-Faqār's passing, though it does not specify how exactly he met his end.

⁴¹ 'Alī Muḥammad Khān, *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i 'ālī-shān*, fols. 73b–74a.

⁴² According to Abdul Shakoor Rashad, the name Bagī is derived from the Pashto word *bag* meaning "big"; see Abdul Shakoor Rashad, "Ashraf-ul-Wuzara, Shah Wali Khan Bamizai," *Afghanistan* 20, no. 3 (1967): 35–36. Alternatively, Bigī Khān also seems like a plausible spelling for Shāh Walī Khān's former name. According to Sulṭān Muḥammad, Shāh Walī Khān was called Shāh Nawāz Khān while in the service of Nādir Shāh; see Sulṭān Muḥammad, *Tārikh-i Sulṭānī*, 124. For further details on Shāh Walī Khān, see Ḥusayn Barzigar, "Shāh Walī Khān

Khān Jahān Khān became Commander (*sardār*) of the military and was given the prestigious title of Khan of Khans (*khān-i khānān*);⁴³ and ‘Abd Allāh Khān was elevated to the rank of Head of the Dīwān (*dīwān bēg*).⁴⁴

Besides offering a rare glimpse into Aḥmad’s time in Nādir’s service, these passages from the *Tārīkh-i Shāh Walī Khān wazīr* and *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shāh* suggest that the future Durrānī ruler attained a middle rank while serving as a guard of Nādir’s harem. According to Ghulām Ḥusayn Khān and Ghulām ‘Alī Āzād, Aḥmad attained the rank of *ming bāshī*, or Commander of a Thousand.⁴⁵ Many other sources add that Aḥmad served as *suḥbat-yasāwulī*, which may be translated as “aide-de-camp,” a post reserved for officials who served as personal attendants of the ruler at the royal court.⁴⁶

Bāmīzāyy,” in Ḥasan Anūsha, ed., *Dānishnāma-i adab-i fārsī*, vol. 3, *Adab-i fārsī dar Afghānistān* (Tehran: Wizārat-i Farhang wa Irshād-i Islāmī, 1378 H.sh./1999), 563–64.

⁴³ For further details on Khān Jahān Khān, see Wakīlī Pōpalza’ī, *Timūr Shāh Durrānī*, 2:626–33; and Ḥusayn Barzigar, “Jahān Khān Fōfalzāyy,” in Ḥasan Anūsha, ed., *Dānishnāma-i adab-i fārsī*, vol. 3, *Adab-i fārsī dar Afghānistān* (Tehran: Wizārat-i Farhang wa Irshād-i Islāmī, 1378 H.sh./1999), 298–300.

⁴⁴ For details on the significance of the post of the *dīwān bēg* in Central Asian history, see *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., s.v. “Dīwān-Begī” (by Yu. Bregel); for the significance of this office in the Timurids and Safavid periods, also see *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. “Dīwānbegī, i. The Timurid Period” (by Shiro Ando); and *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. “Dīwānbegī, ii. The Safavid Period” (by Roger M. Savory). The relationship between Aḥmad Shāh and his *dīwān bēg* ‘Abd Allāh Khān, which dates back to their time in Nādir Shāh’s service, is discussed in Wakīlī Pōpalza’ī, *Timūr Shāh Durrānī*, 2:600–8; and Ḥusayn Barzigar, “‘Abd Allāh Khān Fōfalzāy,” in Ḥasan Anūsha, ed., *Dānishnāma-i adab-i fārsī*, vol. 3, *Adab-i fārsī dar Afghānistān* (Tehran: Wizārat-i Farhang wa Irshād-i Islāmī, 1378 H.sh./1999), 683–85.

⁴⁵ In the Lucknow lithograph edition (as in the more recent Tehran edition) of the *Khizāna-i ‘āmira*, this term was incorrectly transcribed as *bank/bang bāshī*; see Ghulām ‘Alī Āzād Bilgrāmī, *Khizāna-i ‘āmira*, lithog. ed. (Lucknow, 1871), 97; Ghulām ‘Alī Āzād, *Khizāna-i ‘āmira*, ed. Nikūbakht and Bēg, 128. This may have led Singh to assert that Aḥmad served as Nādir’s treasury officer (perhaps by reading *bank* as “bank?”); see Singh, *Ahmad Shah Durrani*, 18n6.

⁴⁶ Gulistāna, *Mujmal al-tawārīkh*, ed. Mudarris-Razawī, 58–59; Abū al-Ḥasan Qazwīnī, *Fawā’id al-ṣafawiyya*, 159; Ghulām ‘Alī Āzād, *Khizāna-i ‘āmira*, ed. Nikūbakht and Bēg, 128; Ghulām Ḥusayn Khān, *Siyar al-muta’akhhirīn*, 2:15; Ṭahmās Bēg Khān, *Ṭahmās-nāma*, ed. Aslam, 45–46; Muḥammad Mustajāb, *Gulistān-i Raḥmat*, fol. 98b; Sārāwī, *Tārīkh-i Muḥammadī*, 36; ‘Abd al-Karīm “Bukhārī,” *Histoire de l’Asie Centrale*, 1:8; Rīzā Qulī Khān Hidāyat, *Tārīkh-i Rawzat al-ṣafā-yi Nāshirī*, 9:24; and Sulṭān Muḥammad, *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī*, 122. On the function of *yasāwuls*

While the sources generally agree that Aḥmad spent the early part of his career in Nādir's service, claims that the latter bestowed special favour upon him appear to be exaggerated.⁴⁷ In recent times several authors have asserted that Aḥmad had been in command of all Afghan troops when Nādir was killed in 1160/1747.⁴⁸ There are also various traditions that assert that Aḥmad was one of Nādir's favourites and that the latter even foretold his rule. Imām al-Dīn recounts a tradition according to which Nādir claimed never to have met anyone in all his travels with Aḥmad's outstanding qualities. Moreover, Nādir is said to have summoned Aḥmad into his presence one day and informed him that he would become ruler; Nādir then implored Aḥmad to treat his descendants with kindness when he became king.⁴⁹ Sulṭān Muḥammad recounts a similar tradition according to which Nādir foretold Aḥmad's rise to power and asked him to treat his descendants generously; he adds that Nādir cut off a piece of Aḥmad's ear as a memento lest he forget his obligation.⁵⁰

and *suḥbat-yasāwuls* or *yasāwul-i suḥbats*, see Mīrzā Muḥammad Rafī'ā Jābirī-Anṣārī, *Mīrzā Rafī'ā's Dastūr al-mulūk: A Manual of Later Ṣafavid Administration*, fac. ed. and trans. M. Ismail Marcinkowski (Kuala Lumpur: International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization, 2002), 200–2.

⁴⁷ Writing on the authority of Shēr Muḥammad Gandāpūrī, Ghubār suggests that Aḥmad participated with the Abdālī in the Daghestan campaigns between 1153–54/1741 and 1155/1743, after which Nādir promoted him in rank on account of the superior fighting abilities he demonstrated on the battlefield; see Ghubār, *Aḥmad Shāh Bābā-yi Afghān*, 79–80; Gandāpūrī, *Tārīkh-i khūrshīd-i jahān*, 168. This telling of events is not corroborated either by the Nādirid chronicles or the TASH.

⁴⁸ Sarkar, *Fall of the Mughal Empire*, 1:111; Lockhart, *Nadir Shah*, 261–62; Singh, *Ahmad Shah Durrani*, 21.

⁴⁹ Imām al-Dīn, *Ḥusayn Shāhī*, fols. 11b–12b. For a translation of this passage from the ḤSh, see Noelle-Karimi, "Afghan Politics and the Indo-Persian Literary Realm," 68–69. Imām al-Dīn's account was reproduced in several later histories including 'Abd al-Karīm 'Alawī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad*, fac. ed., 5–6; Fayz Muḥammad, *The History of Afghanistan*, 1:12–13. Variations of this tradition can also be found in several later works. This includes the *ʿIbrat-nāma*, an early nineteenth century chronicle of the Punjab under Sikh rule. See 'Alī al-Dīn Lāhōrī, *ʿIbrat-nāma*, ed. Muḥammad Bāqir, 2 vols. (Lahore: Panjābī Adabī Academy, 1961), 1:197.

⁵⁰ Sulṭān Muḥammad, *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī*, 121; cf. Sarkar, *Fall of the Mughal Empire*, 1:112n. The tradition that Nādir cut a piece of Aḥmad's ear off is also recounted in Abū al-Ḥasan Qazwīnī's *Fawā'id al-Ṣafawiyya* and Ferrier's *History of the Afghans*. But in contrast to the TSu, these sources suggest that Nādir's action was a punishment for an unspecified offense (*taqṣīrī*) committed by Aḥmad; see Abū al-Ḥasan Qazwīnī, *Fawā'id al-Ṣafawiyya*, 159; Ferrier, *History of the Afghans*, 93.

The problem is that Nādirid and early-Durrānī sources provide no evidence that Nādir treated Aḥmad with esteem. Maḥdī Khān and Muḥammad Kāẓim, for instance, have plenty to say about ‘Abd al-Ghanī and the favour with which Nādir viewed him but say nothing similar about Aḥmad. In one of his few references to Aḥmad, Maḥdī Khān only states that he was a supporter of the Nādirid state (*hawā-khwāh-i dawlat-i Nādirī*) and was present at court when Nādir was killed.⁵¹ The misconception that Aḥmad became a *ming bāshī* may be based on the fact that he was among the 3,000–4,000 Afghan troops who returned to Qandahar after Nādir was killed.⁵² As many of these Afghan troops allegedly proclaimed Aḥmad as their shah, some authors may have presumed that he had command over them as a *ming bāshī* in the Nādirid army. The claim that Aḥmad was commander of the Afghans under Nādir is also problematic because Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī indicates this post was held not by Aḥmad but by his Abdālī kinsman, Nūr Muḥammad ‘Alīzay. In fact, most primary sources provide convincing evidence that Nādir tried to curb the authority of individuals like Aḥmad who were members of the old Abdālī aristocracy. For instance, the *Siyar al-muta’akhhirīn* describes Aḥmad as “among high-born members of the Abdālī-Afghan confederacy” (*az ra’īs-zādahā-yi ūlūs-i Afghān-i Abdālī*).⁵³ Likewise, the *Bayān-i wāqī’* relates that Aḥmad was already among the notables of his tribe, and Nādir refrained from placing people like him in positions of leadership lest they gather support and incite hostility towards

⁵¹ Maḥdī Khān, *Jahāngushā-yi Nādirī*, 426.

⁵² Imām al-Dīn numbers the Afghans in Nādir’s camp at 3,000; see Imām al-Dīn, *Ḥusayn Shāhī*, fol. 13a. Nādir’s physician, Pere Bazin, who was present at the royal court when the ruler was killed, numbered the Afghans at 4,000; see Louis Bazin, “Mémoires sur les dernières années du règne de Thamas Kouli-Kan, & sur sa mort tragique, contenus dans une lettre du Frère Bazin de la Compagnie de Jésus, au Père Roger Procureur général des Missions de Levant,” in *Lettres Édifiantes et Curieuses, Écrites des Missions Étrangères*, vol. 4, *Mémoires du Levant*, ed. Yves Mathurin Marie Tréaudet de Querbeuf (Paris, 1780), 313–14.

⁵³ Ghulām Ḥusayn Khān, *Siyar al-muta’akhhirīn*, 2:15.

him.⁵⁴ Further, Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī indicates that Nādir recognized Aḥmad's high standing within the Abdālī confederacy and as a result did not bestow special favour on him or his family members. He describes Nādir's protocol (*dastūr*) as follows: "He placed anyone within a given tribe who traditionally possessed nobility and high-standing in positions devoid of esteem and prestige; [whereas] he honored and elevated individuals who did not possess repute or standing so that they would always recognize that their [newfound] nobility issued from his dominion (*dawlat*) and refrain from removing their heads from the collar of servitude."⁵⁵ Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī then describes how Nādir put this protocol into practice by keeping Aḥmad and his family members under close watch while simultaneously promoting figures of lesser standing within the tribe, such as 'Abd al-Ghanī Alakōzay and Nūr Muḥammad 'Alīzay, to positions of authority. To enhance their status, Nādir assigned to the chiefs of the Alakōzay and 'Alīzay clans the most productive lands in Qandahar as tax-free land-grants (*tiyūl*) in exchange for military service.⁵⁶

It appears later authors embellished Aḥmad's connection to Nādir for several reasons. One was to legitimize Aḥmad's status as Nādir's successor, especially in the former Nādirid domains of Indo-Khurasan over which the Durrānī extended their authority. Elsewhere I have described how such traditions were part of elaborate narratives designed in part to legitimate the status of the Durrānī kings as overlords of their Afshārid puppets in Mashhad, which served as an important Durrānī satellite for most of Aḥmad's reign. Because the traditions of Nādir predicting Aḥmad's rule were produced in later times and served blatant ideological functions, they ought to be treated with skepticism.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ 'Abd al-Karīm Kashmīrī, *Bayān-i wāqī'*, 184–86.

⁵⁵ Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, ed. Murādōf, 1:13b–14a.

⁵⁶ Leech, "An Account of the Early Abdalees," 469.

⁵⁷ A similar sentiment is also expressed in Gommans, *The Rise of the Indo-Afghan Empire*, 55n.

The most reliable evidence suggests Nādir kept close watch over Aḥmad and curbed his influence on account of the latter's high standing in the Abdālī confederacy and the potential threat he posed to Nādir's own authority. This would explain why Aḥmad accompanied Nādir on certain expeditions and served as one of the guards of the royal harem during what turned out to be Nādir's final campaign. But the sources also indicate that Nādir allowed Aḥmad to surround himself with a small group of confidants. These include the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ʿālī-shān*, which, as noted earlier, states that Abdālī like Bagī Khān, Khān Jahān Khān, and ʿAbd Allāh Khān supported Aḥmad during his time in Nādir's service. As for the *Tārīkh-i Shāh Walī Khān wazīr*, it states that the Durrānī leaders in the Nādirid military served Aḥmad day and night in anticipation that he would one day become ruler.⁵⁸ Similarly, the *Bayān-i wāqīʿ* states, "The Abdālī who served as *dah bāshī*, *yūz bāshī*, and *mīng bāshī* in Nādir Shāh's domain secretly exhibited support for him [i.e., Aḥmad] and surreptitiously called for his political ascendancy."⁵⁹

The expectation that Aḥmad would replace Nādir as ruler is reflected in the various accounts about the holy man named Ṣābir Shāh who joined Aḥmad while the latter was stationed at Nādir's camp. As described in detail below, Ṣābir Shāh is said to have foretold Nādir's death and Aḥmad's subsequent political ascent. While such anecdotes are without doubt retrospective retellings of events, they should not be dismissed entirely. Nādir's harsh style of rule was the source of much resentment, and towards the end of his reign there emerged numerous plots against his life and rebellions throughout his realm. It is reasonable to presume that because the proverbial writing was on the wall, there was a sense that Nādir's reign would not endure for long, and many Afghans may genuinely have

⁵⁸ Wakīlī Pōpalzaʿī, *Aḥmad Shāh*, 18.

⁵⁹ ʿAbd al-Karīm Kashmīrī, *Bayān-i wāqīʿ*, 186.

viewed Aḥmad, who belonged to a chiefly family that had exercised political authority in the past, as a suitable candidate to replace him.

To summarize, conclusive evidence has yet to surface to the effect that Aḥmad Khān Abdālī participated in the Nādirid invasion of India in his youth. It appears that later chroniclers devised such claims as a way to establish an early precedent for the frequent Durrānī invasions of India. While such claims would have been used to serve certain ideological functions—e.g., to either justify or condemn Aḥmad’s activities in India, depending on one’s political leanings—they are ultimately ahistorical. Moreover, in light of Nādir’s highly cautious attitude towards the Abdālī nobility, it is doubtful that he would have elevated Aḥmad to a high rank in the Nādirid army, as some authors have maintained. In fact, that Aḥmad spent his early life as a political prisoner and did not achieve any rank of distinction would in part explain why his time in Nādir’s service is not detailed in primary sources like the *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, and why, by extension, so little is generally known about his early life. Notwithstanding his unremarkable career in the Nādirid army, Aḥmad’s prestigious standing within the *ulūs* as the son of one of its foremost khans enabled him to garner the support necessary to stake his claim to the leadership of the Abdālī and to thereby establish himself as successor to Nādir in the aftermath of the latter’s assassination.

6.3: From Abdālī Khān to Shāh Durr-i Durrān

Aḥmad Khān’s Retreat to Qandahar and Seizure of the Nādirid Treasure

According to the *Tārīkh-i Shāh Walī Khān wazīr*, Aḥmad Khān accompanied Nādir and his son Naṣr Allāh on the march from Baghdad to Mashhad.⁶⁰ This march took place after Nādir’s campaigns in Ottoman Iraq, which culminated in the finalization of the peace treaty

⁶⁰ Wakīlī Pōpalzaʿī, *Aḥmad Shāh*, 18–19.

with the Ottomans known as the Treaty of Kurdan on 17 Sha‘bān 1159/4 September 1746.⁶¹ After concluding this peace, Nādir set out for Mashhad to deal with various disturbances in Khurasan. After passing through Isfahan, Yazd, Kirman, and Ṭabas, he reached Mashhad in Rabī‘ II 1160/April 1747. He then marched against Kurdish rebels in Khabūshān, but while encamped near the town of Faṭḥābād, he was assassinated by a group of disgruntled Qizilbash soldiers on 11 Jumādā II 1160/20 June 1747.⁶²

When news of Nādir’s death spread the following morning and the camp was thrown into confusion, the Qizilbash prepared to launch a surprise attack on the Abdālī-Durrānī troops located below Nādir’s tent.⁶³ But news of the plot reached the Abdālī-Durrānī. Joining forces with the Uzbek troops stationed at Nādir’s court, they fought off the Qizilbash and made their way to Qandahar.⁶⁴ The Nādirid sources agree that Aḥmad Khān, who was among the 3,000–4,000 Afghan soldiers present at court, helped lead his men to safety in the chaos after Nādir’s death. Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī adds that Aḥmad personally led an attack on the

⁶¹ For the details of the Treaty of Kurdan, see Maḥdī Khān, *Jahāngushā-yi Nādirī*, 415–19; Lockhart, *Nadir Shah*, 254–55; J. C. Hurewitz, *Diplomacy in the Near and Middle East, A Documentary Record: 1535–1914*, 2 vols. (Princeton, NJ: D. Van Nostrand, 1956), 1:51–52; Tucker, *Nadir Shah’s Quest for Legitimacy*, 98–99.

⁶² Maḥdī Khān, *Jahāngushā-yi Nādirī*, 425–26; Lockhart, *Nadir Shah*, 257–65. Note that Sulṭān Muḥammad gives the alternate date of 15 Jumādā II 1160/24 June 1747; see Sulṭān Muḥammad, *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī*, 122.

⁶³ On fol. 18a of the *TASh* we read that Muḥammad Khān ‘Alizay was the head (*sarkarda*) of the Abdālī-Durrānī troops at Nādir’s camp. This individual is identical with the Nūr Muḥammad Khān ‘Alizay described in the subsequent pages of the *TASh*. The omission of “Nūr” in the first instance may have been an oversight on the part of the manuscript’s scribe. Though Nūr Muḥammad Khān ‘Alizay was the Abdālī-Durrānī leader, Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī implies that he was not present at Nādir’s camp when the latter was assassinated but was instead in Qandahar preparing to escort Nādir’s treasury to Mashhad. Later sources like the *TSu* suggest Nūr Muḥammad Khān accompanied Aḥmad Khān and the Abdālī when they marched from Nādir’s camp to Qandahar, though this may be based on a misreading of earlier sources; see Sulṭān Muḥammad, *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī*, 122.

⁶⁴ Maḥdī Khān, *Jahāngushā-yi Nādirī*, 426; Muḥammad Kāẓim, *Ālam-ārā-yi Nādirī*, ed. Riyāḥī, 3:1196.

Qizilbash, killing and capturing some and causing others to disperse, before departing for Qandahar with captured equipment and prisoners.⁶⁵

According to the *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*'s detailed account of their movements from Khabūshān to Qandahar, Aḥmad and the Abdālī-Durrānī first marched to Turshīz (present-day Kashmār) via Sulṭān Maydān. Along the way the Abdālī-Durrānī were able to gather supplies while fending off hostile forces before moving on to Turbat-i Ḥaydariyya. There, news arrived that Nādir's nephew, 'Alī Qulī Khān, had dispatched an army from Herat to impede the Afghan forces.⁶⁶ But when it became apparent that this army had been sent as a decoy, Aḥmad and the Abdālī-Durrānī proceeded to Tūn and then to Farāh where they defeated another detachment sent by 'Alī Qulī Khān. Aḥmad and his men then marched to Girishk, a town located west of Qandahar.

Ghulām 'Alī Khān Naqawī notes that Nādir had written to the Mughal emperor Muḥammad Shāh demanding that the latter immediately send all of the gold in his possession.⁶⁷ This vast treasure was, at the time of Nādir's death, being escorted from Kabul to Nādir's fortress at Kalāt (also known as Kalāt-i Nādirī) by Taqī Khān Shīrāzī and Nāṣir Khān, the governors (*sūbadār*) of Kabul and Peshawar, respectively.⁶⁸ This escort was to rendezvous with Nūr Muḥammad Khān 'Alīzay⁶⁹, Nādir's appointee as chief of the Abdālī and

⁶⁵ Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, ed. Murādōf, 1:18a–18b; Siyālkōtī, *Shāhnāma-i Aḥmadī*, fols. 139a–40b; Āzar Bēgdilī, *Ātishkada-i Āzar*, 4:469; Imām al-Dīn, *Ḥusayn Shāhī*, fol. 13a; Muḥammad Mustajāb, *Gulistān-i Raḥmat*, fols. 98b–99a; Rizā Qulī Khān Hidāyat, *Tārīkh-i Rawzat al-ṣafā-yi Nāṣirī*, 8:565–66.

⁶⁶ Muḥammad Kāzīm suggests Aḥmad Khān made his way to Qandahar via Herat. This is not mentioned in the TASH and, moreover, seems unlikely in light of the presence of 'Alī Qulī Khān's forces in the province then.

⁶⁷ Ghulām 'Alī Khān Naqawī, *Imād al-sa'adat*, lithog. ed. ([Lucknow], 1897), 36–37.

⁶⁸ Further details on the site of Kalāt-i Nādirī are given in A. C. Yate, "Kalāt-i-Nādirī," *Journal of The Royal Central Asian Society* 11, no. 2 (1924): 156–68.

⁶⁹ Ghubār suggests that Nūr Muḥammad Khān was a "Ghilzay" and that the several authors have mistakenly referred to him as "'Alīzay" (i.e., the tribe belonging to the Abdālī-Durrānī confederacy); see Ghubār, *Aḥmad Shāh Bābā-yi Afghān*, 74–75. The sources of Ghubār's assertion is not clear (perhaps it is a misspelling and/or

commander (*sardār*) of Qandahar, who set up camp at Chaman-i Sanjarī, located about one *farsakh* west of the citadel, before proceeding to Kalāt.⁷⁰ But while encamped at Girishk, Aḥmad sent messengers to Qandahar to notify Nūr Muḥammad Khān and the Abdālī-Durrānī khans in his retinue of Nādir's death and to advise them not to transport the treasure and equipment in their possession to Kalāt as originally planned. Upon learning of Nādir's assassination, the Abdālī-Durrānī officers dispossessed Taqī Khān and Nāṣir Khān and confiscated the treasure and equipment before entering Qandahar.⁷¹ The seizure of the Nādirid treasure was a windfall as it helped finance the campaigns of Aḥmad and his officers during the formative stages of Durrānī rule.⁷²

misreading of “‘Alizay,” which is transcribed similarly to “Ghilzay” in Persian), but most primary sources agree that his tribal designation should be read ‘Alizay.

⁷⁰ Sanjarī (Sinjirī?) refers to a group of villages located roughly 11 miles to the west of Qandahar on the road to Girishk; see Adamec, *Historical and Political Gazetteer of Afghanistan*, 5:457.

⁷¹ Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, ed. Murādōf, 1:18a–22, 1:24b–25a.

⁷² The amount of plunder differs depending on the source consulted. According to Ghulām ‘Alī Khān Naqawī, the treasure amounted to ten lakhs of *ashrafīs*, the latter being the name used to denote gold coins; see Ghulām ‘Alī Khān Naqawī, *Imād al-sa‘ādat*, 37. For details on the coinage of eighteenth century Iran, India, and Indo-Khurasan, including gold *ashrafīs* and other currencies circulating in the Durrānī realm, see R. B. Whitehead, *Catalogue of Coins in the Panjab Museum, Lahore*, vol. 3, *Coins of Nādir Shāh and the Durrānī Dynasty* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1934), xxxiii–xxxiv; Rudi Matthee, Willem Floor, and Patrick Clawson, *The Monetary History of Iran: From the Safavids to the Qajars* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2013), 32–33, 172. Sulṭān Muḥammad indicates that the amount was two crores, i.e., the Indian unit of measurement used to denote ten million; this would give a total 20,000,000, presumably rupees. Like Sulṭān Muḥammad, Ferrier suggests the amount totaled two crores (i.e., 20,000,000) “in money, diamonds, and shawls.” Another tradition, cited by Fayz Muḥammad, on the authority of *Ātishkada* of Āzar Bēgdilī, gives the amount of twenty-six crores of rupees, which equals to 260,000,000. Ferrier's number is reiterated by Tate, while Sarkar gives the much lower number of 30 lakhs (i.e., 3,000,000) of rupees; see Āzar Bēgdilī, *Ātishkada-i Āzar*, 4:469; Sulṭān Muḥammad, *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī*, 124; Fayz Muḥammad, *The History of Afghanistan*, 1:14; Ferrier, *History of the Afghans*, 70; Tate, *The Kingdom of Afghanistan*, 69; Sarkar, *Fall of the Mughal Empire*, 1:114; Singh, *Aḥmad Shah Durrani*, 29–30n. In the absence of eyewitness testimony, the exact amount of plunder that fell to Aḥmad Shāh will remain subject to speculation.

Divergent Accounts of Aḥmad Shāh's Accession

The standard accounts of Aḥmad Shāh's accession in the secondary literature agree that when he arrived in Qandahar in the summer of 1160/1747, he assumed leadership over his tribe with the newly adopted regnal title Shāh Durr-i Durrān—King, Pearl of Pearls—and also changed the name of his tribe from Abdālī to Durrānī.⁷³ But despite its historical significance in signaling the founding of the Durrānī polity, there remains a great deal of obscurity surrounding Aḥmad Shāh's accession, to wit, there are differences of opinion concerning the exact date and place of Aḥmad's coronation.⁷⁴ There is also no cogent explanation as to why he adopted the title Shāh Durr-i Durrān and replaced the tribal name “Abdālī” with the epithet “Durrānī.” Further, while authors tend to present Aḥmad's assumption of kingship as an inevitable outcome, there is plenty of evidence in the primary sources that his rise to power was, in fact, far more precarious than is generally acknowledged. The uncertainty surrounding Aḥmad Shāh's accession is partly due to the absence of eyewitness accounts. What we instead possess are several later retellings that vary in subtle but important ways.

⁷³ The epithet Durr-i Durrān is inscribed on coins struck at Lahore in 1161/1747–48. The existence of these coins supports the view that Aḥmad Shāh adopted the epithet Durr-i Durrān at the onset of his reign. For more on the coinage of Aḥmad Shāh, see Singh, *Aḥmad Shah Durrani*, 365–73; and especially Whitehead, *Catalogue of Coins in the Panjab Museum, Lahore*, 3:xxi–xxv, 13–48.

⁷⁴ Ghubār suggests that Aḥmad Shāh arrived at Qandahar in Rajab 1160/July–August 1747 while Wakīlī Pōpalza'i specifies that his accession took place on 21 Rajab 1160/28 July 1747; see Ghubār, *Aḥmad Shāh Bābā-yi Afghān*, 85; Wakīlī Pōpalza'i, *Aḥmad Shāh*, 49. However, neither author indicates the source of his assertion. According to the *Tazkira* of Anand Ram “Mukhlīṣ,” Aḥmad Shāh issued a royal edict on 15 July 1747, appointing Muḥammad Hāshim Afrīdī as chief of the Afrīdī of the Peshawar region. This appears to affirm that Aḥmad Shāh's accession took place no later than mid-July; see Sarkar, *Fall of the Mughal Empire*, 1:118; Singh, *Aḥmad Shah Durrani*, 31n14. Tate, perhaps basing himself on the same edict mentioned by Anand Ram, gives the same date; see Tate, *The Kingdom of Afghanistan*, 70. That the Durrānī marches on Kabul, Peshawar, Lahore and Sirhind took place in the autumn and winter of 1747 supports the assertion that Aḥmad Shāh's accession took place in the summer of that year. Assuming that his birth took place between 1720 and 1722, as discussed earlier, he would have been somewhere between 25 and 27 years of age at the time.

Ghulām Ḥusayn Khān, author of the *Siyar al-muta'akhhirīn*, writes that while Aḥmad was in the service of Nādir Shāh, he was granted permission to visit the shrine of Imām Rizā in Mashhad. There he chanced upon a *darwīsh*, or Muslim mystic, named Shāh Ṣābir, whom the author notes was a grandson of a certain Ustā[d] Ḥalāl-khōr, a well-known horse-trader (*na'l-band*) and *darwīsh* from Kabul. Aḥmad saw that Shāh Ṣābir had erected a small tent at the shrine in the manner of children (*miṣl-i atfāl*). Aḥmad supposedly approached him and asked, “*Darwīsh*, what are these tents and why the child’s play?” He replied, “Are you Aḥmad Abdālī?” When the latter affirmed his identity, Shāh Ṣābir explained, “This is a tent that will collapse when Nādir Shāh dies. At that point, you will become king.” Aḥmad returned to serve Nādir but left one of his friends behind to keep an eye on the tent. When Nādir was killed, Aḥmad and his tribesmen separated from the rest of the army and went to Mashhad. There he met his friend and asked him about the tent. The latter informed Aḥmad of the exact date and time the tent collapsed, and events unfolded just as the *darwīsh* predicted. Aḥmad was thus convinced he would soon attain rule.⁷⁵

A similar version of events is provided in the *Bayān-i wāqīʿ*. The account begins with the same *darwīsh*, Bābā Ṣābir Shāh, who had travelled from his native Lahore to the court of Nādir Shāh at some point prior to the ruler’s death.⁷⁶ This *darwīsh* had a habit of erecting miniature tents and playing with them in the manner of children (*bi-ṭawr-i atfāl*). The tents Ṣābir Shāh erected and played with apparently had talismanic significance, for when asked about this peculiar practice, he replied, “Nādir’s days are numbered and these royal tents that I pitch represent the sovereignty (*salṭanat*) of Aḥmad Shāh.” As Ṣābir Shāh had

⁷⁵ Ghulām Ḥusayn Khān, *Siyar al-muta'akhhirīn*, 2:16; Jadunath Sarkar, “Ahmad Shah Abdali in India, 1748,” *Islamic Culture* 6, no. 2 (1932): 217–18; Sarkar, *Fall of the Mughal Empire*, 1:113; Singh, *Ahmad Shah Durrani*, 27n. The *Bayān-i wāqīʿ* similarly indicates that Ṣābir Shāh was the son of a horse-trader based in Lahore.

⁷⁶ ‘Abd al-Karīm Kashmīrī obtained information about Ṣābir Shāh from one of his confidants, Muḥammad Yār Khān Żarrāb bāshī (lit., “Master of the mint”) at Lahore.

prophesied, Nādir Shāh soon passed away and Aḥmad Shāh's reign commenced; for this reason, the latter closely followed the precepts of the *darwīsh*, who became his spiritual master (*pīr*).⁷⁷ On his advice, Aḥmad assumed the crown of kingship before entering Qandahar, changed the name of the Abdālī to “Durrānī,” and adopted the title “King, Pearl of Pearls” (*pādshāh Durr-i Durrān*).⁷⁸

Imām al-Dīn and Gulistāna provide more fleshed out versions of Aḥmad's accession that may well have been adapted from the account in the *Bayān-i wāqīʿ*. In the *Mujmal al-tawārīkh* of Gulistāna, the *darwīsh*, who is unnamed but is clearly the same Bābā Ṣābir Shāh described in the *Bayān-i wāqīʿ*, is said to have appeared before Aḥmad Khān at Khabūshān and said to him: “I perceive the signs of kingship on your visage. Give me a bundle of cloth (*karbās*) so that I may sew you a few tents and coverings and recite a litany (*wirdī*) to enable you to sit upon the throne of sovereignty in the near future.” Aḥmad Khān placed faith in the *darwīsh*'s words and supplied him with a bundle of cloth. The *darwīsh* immediately sewed ten miniature tents along with coverings like those usually made for kings. Ṣābir Shāh erected the talismanic tents around the site of Aḥmad Khān's tent and sat in their midst reciting litanies (*awrād*). Three days later Nādir was killed and the Afghans and Uzbeks in his service retired to Qandahar. The *darwīsh* accompanied the Afghan troops and wherever they stopped he would recite prayers while playing with the tents like a child. The Afghan chiefs consulted one another and agreed that a leader should be chosen among them, for to enter Qandahar leaderless would pose a great danger since it was patrolled by the Qizilbash. The chiefs agreed to appoint Aḥmad Khān their leader. They reportedly placed a bunch of wheat

⁷⁷ Bābā Ṣābir Shāh is part of the long tradition of holy men—Sufis, shamans, sayyids, et al.—who served as spiritual advisors of myriad rulers throughout Islamic history. An historically prominent example is Sayyid Baraka, the spiritual advisor to Timūr. For further examples of holy men who performed similar functions, see Subtelny, *Timurids in Transition*, 62–63.

⁷⁸ ʿAbd al-Karīm Kashmīrī, *Bayān-i wāqīʿ*, 186, 188–89.

(*dasta-i ‘alafi*) on his head in place of a crown and gave him the title “Aḥmad Shāh” before making their way to Qandahar.⁷⁹

Imām al-Dīn offers a similar account: Three years before Nādir’s assassination, the same Bābā Ṣābir Shāh attached himself to the Nādirid court where he erected tents and surrounded them with horses fashioned from clay and “played” with his creations. Whenever Aḥmad would go to greet Nādir Shāh, he would pass by and greet the *darwīsh*. The latter would reply, “O Aḥmad Khān, I am preparing the trappings of your sovereignty (*salṭanat*).” The words of the *darwīsh* resonated with Aḥmad Shāh and on the day Nādir was killed he departed for Qandahar, taking the *darwīsh* with him. After much effort, they were able to escape and reach safety. After travelling a few stations from the Nādirid court, the *darwīsh* said, “Become king now.” Aḥmad Shāh replied, “I am not fit to exercise sovereignty, nor do I possess the required trappings (*asbāb wa ḥashmat*).” The *darwīsh* formed a circular mound of earth (*ḥalqa-i gil*), took the king’s hand, and sat him atop it, saying: “This is your throne of sovereignty.” He then placed a tuft of grass (*giyāh-i sabz*) on his head, saying: “This is your royal plume of vicegerency (*jīgha-i khilāfat*)...You are the Durrānī king.” From that day onward, he changed the name of his tribe from Abdālī to Durrānī.⁸⁰

Whereas the above accounts suggest Aḥmad Shāh’s election occurred before the Abdālī-Durrānī arrived at Qandahar, sources produced at his court imply that his accession took place after they reached Qandahar. A prominent example is the *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī* where Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī prefaces his account of Aḥmad Shāh’s accession by pointing out

⁷⁹ Gulistāna, *Mujmal al-tawārīkh*, ed. Mudarris-Raḥawī, 59–60. Amin Tarzi recounts a similar version that is preserved in Kūhmarraʿī’s supplement (*ẓayl*) to the *MTbN* (p. 405); see Tarzi, “*Tārīkh-i Ahmad Shahi*,” 91n50. It would appear Kūhmarraʿī ultimately derived his account from the *TSu* of Sulṭān Muḥammad and the *ḤSh* of Imām al-Dīn.

⁸⁰ Imām al-Dīn, *Ḥusayn Shāhī*, fols. 13a–14a. The account of Imām al-Dīn is reproduced in ‘Abd al-Karīm ‘Alawī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad*, fac. ed., 5–6; Sayyid Ḥusayn Shīrāzī, *Tārīkh-i Durrāniyān*, 46–47. For an analysis of Imām al-Dīn’s account see Noelle-Karimi, “Afghan Politics and the Indo-Persian Literary Realm,” 67–71.

that the Abdālī-Durrānī were the source of Nādir's temporal authority and thus best qualified to inherit rule after his death. The author adds that of the various potential claimants, Aḥmad was the most suitable because his ancestors had traditionally held positions of authority within the confederacy and leadership was thus his hereditary right (*mīrās*). In an assembly convened at Qandahar, all of the great khans, chiefs, and military commanders (*tamāmī-i khawānīn-i 'uẓẓām wa ru'asā' wa sarkardagān*) of the tribe thoroughly deliberated before imploring Aḥmad to sit upon "the hereditary throne of sovereignty" (*awrang-i salṭanat-i mawrūṣī*) on account of his outstanding credentials. Despite these appeals, however, Aḥmad was reluctant to accede, preferring a life of seclusion and spiritual contemplation.⁸¹ There then appeared the holy man, Darwīsh Šābir, who is said to have perceived the radiance of authority emanating from Aḥmad and, "through the inspiration received by recipients of knowledge of the hidden world" (*bi-ilhām-i mulhamān-i ghaybī*), foreshadowed that Aḥmad would become ruler when the Nādirid dispensation expired. While the other attendees petitioned Aḥmad to no avail, Šābir Shāh approached him and affixed a tuft of grass (*giyāh-i sabzī*) to the side of his turban in place of a royal plume. He then recited a prayer and those present recognized Aḥmad as their leader.⁸²

The *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī* recounts yet another version of events that combines elements of the above-mentioned accounts. According to Sulṭān Muḥammad's narrative, after Nādir's assassination, a group of Abdālī chiefs who included Ḥājī Jamāl Khān Bārakzay, Muḥabbat Khān Fōfāzay, Mūsā Khān Ishāqzay "Dūngī," Nūr Muḥammad Khān 'Alīzay, Naṣr Allāh Nūrzay, and others went to Qandahar where they convened an assembly at the shrine of the local saint, Shēr-i Surkh Bābā, located at the centre of Nādirābād. These khans recognized

⁸¹ Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī's account bears very close resemblance to the narrative of Aḥmad Shāh's accession in his letter to the Ottoman ruler, Sulṭān Muṣṭafā III; see Jalālī, *Nāma-i Aḥmad Shāh Bābā*, 11–15.

⁸² Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, ed. Murādōf, 1:22a–25a.

the need to elect a leader among them but were unable to agree on a candidate. Aḥmad Khān Sadōzay (spelled Ṣadōzay) was also present at the assembly but did not stake a claim to leadership. The *darwīsh* Ṣābir Shāh, a native of Lahore who had joined Aḥmad when he and the Abdālī separated from Nādir’s camp at Khabūshān, appeared and stated that the leaders should stop disputing among themselves because Aḥmad Khān Sadōzay was the most suitable person to lead them. In Sulṭān Muḥammad’s version of events, Ṣābir Shāh gathered a cluster of wheat (*khūsha-i gandumī*) and placed it upon Aḥmad Khān’s head and from that day forward he became known as Aḥmad Shāh Pādshāh-i Durrānī. Ḥājji Jamāl Khān and the others khans present consented to Aḥmad Khān’s rule only because he belonged to the Sadōzay clan, which was a relatively minor faction of the Durrānī *ulūs*, and on the understanding that his rule would be dependent on the Durrānī *amīrs* who could easily overthrow him should the need arise.⁸³

Conflicting Narratives of Aḥmad Shāh’s Accession

The divergent accounts of events leading up to Aḥmad Shāh’s accession and his adoption of the epithet “Durr-i Durrān” are unsurprising given that the works in which they are found were composed retrospectively. A significant discrepancy concerns the location where Aḥmad was elected; whereas Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī and Sulṭān Muḥammad indicate he was nominated at an assembly convened by the great Abdālī chiefs at Qandahar, other authors—among them ‘Abd al-Karīm, Imām al-Dīn, and Gulistāna—imply he was chosen as leader at some point after he left the court of Nādir and prior to his arrival in Qandahar. The precise location of this event may seem trivial but has important implications because the view that Aḥmad was appointed leader on the way to Qandahar contradicts the picture painted by sources produced at the Durrānī court, namely, that he was elected at Qandahar.

⁸³ Sulṭān Muḥammad, *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī*, 122–23.

It also implies that only a faction of the Abdālī chiefs brought him to power, which raises the question: Did Aḥmad Shāh attain rule via unanimous consent, as is often alleged, or was his kingship actually attained primarily through coercive measures?

The implications of such inconsistencies, as well as the central questions they raise about the nature of Aḥmad Shāh's kingship, are often elided in the historiography.⁸⁴ For instance, Fayẓ Muḥammad made use of elements of many works—including those of Sulṭān Muḥammad, Imām al-Dīn, and Ḥayāt Khān for his *Sirāj al-tawārikh* but neglected to note the inconsistencies in the different narratives about Aḥmad Shāh's election. Specifically, the author follows Sulṭān Muḥammad's account that a group of Abdālī *amīrs*, especially Ḥājji Jamāl Khān Bārakzay, helped secure Aḥmad in his position as king at Qandahar, but he does not cite any sources that indicate Aḥmad was elected to rule on the way to Qandahar.⁸⁵

In contrast to Fayẓ Muḥammad, Singh acknowledges the inconsistencies in the primary sources about the locale where Aḥmad's election took place. Rather than look into possible explanations for their contradictions, he reconciled the different versions by surmising that a group of Abdālī chose Aḥmad to lead them on the way to Qandahar but that he was formally invested as ruler at a grand assembly that took place in the then provincial capital of Nādirābād. Like Fayẓ Muḥammad, Singh concludes that Aḥmad was elected as shah at an assembly in Qandahar thanks to the support of Ḥājji Jamāl Khān.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ In the contemporary period, various authors have insisted that Aḥmad Shāh was elected at a *loya jirga*, or grand assembly of Pashtun chiefs. But as M. Jamil Hanifi has shown, this view is not supported by any reliable body of historical evidence; see M. Jamil Hanifi, "Editing the Past: Colonial Production of Hegemony through the Loya Jirga in Afghanistan," *Iranian Studies* 27, no. 2 (2004): 295–322.

⁸⁵ Fayẓ Muḥammad, *The History of Afghanistan*, 1:13–14. In his study dedicated to Aḥmad Shāh, Ghubār closely follows Fayẓ Muḥammad's account of events; see Ghubār, *Aḥmad Shāh Bābā-yi Afghān*, 82–87.

⁸⁶ Singh, *Ahmad Shah Durrani*, 24–28, 329.

In addition to their uncritical approach to the sources, the above works also did not utilize Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī's *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, the most informative source on Aḥmad Shāh's reign. While it is true Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī contradicts the many other sources that indicate Aḥmad was nominated on the way to Qandahar, it is entirely plausible that he omitted this fact by design in order to give the impression that his royal patron had been elected unanimously. Moreover, his work offers valuable insight into the opposition Aḥmad faced to his rule. Notwithstanding the singular importance of the *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, later histories tend to neglect it and instead reproduce the account of Aḥmad Shāh's accession found in Bārakzay-era histories like Sulṭān Muḥammad's *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī*.

A significant drawback of Sulṭān Muḥammad's chronicle is its many ahistorical elements. An example is the author's inclusion of Mūsā Khān Dūngī in the assembly at which Aḥmad Shāh was elected. Sulṭān Muḥammad was evidently unaware that Mūsā Khān had been executed on Nādir's orders during the conquest of Qandahar in 1150/1738, as documented in Muḥammad Kāẓim's chronicle, and thus could not have been alive at the time of Aḥmad Shāh's accession. Another anachronism is his exaggeration of Ḥājji Jamāl Khān Bārakzay's role as kingmaker. While it is true certain Bārakzay *amīrs* held important ranks in the Durrānī military, there is no evidence in sources produced during the reign of Aḥmad Shāh, be it *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī* or others, that Ḥājji Jamāl Khān played a significant role in the ruler's election or in any other decision making.⁸⁷ It is also important to bear in mind that the *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī* was composed in the latter half of the nineteenth century, by

⁸⁷ Ḥājji Jamāl Khān is mentioned in the *TASH* as one of several *amīrs* who helped suppress a Balūchī insurgency in 1171/1758–59; see Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, ed. Murādōf, 2:387a. In 1179/1765–66, Aḥmad Shāh formed an alliance with the Bārakzay by marrying a daughter of ‘Abd al-Ḥabīb b. Ḥājji Jamāl Khān to his eldest son Tīmūr Shāh. This marriage alliance, which is documented in the *TASH* (2:585a–85b), facilitated the growth in influence of Ḥājji Jamāl Khān's descendants in the reign of Tīmūr Shāh and in many ways paved the way for the Bārakzay usurpation in the decades after his death in 1207/1793.

which time the chiefs of the Bārakzay clan had completely supplanted Aḥmad Shāh's descendants, i.e., the Sadōzay, as rulers. As Sulṭān Muḥammad was a member of the Bārakzay elite and composed his chronicle in the period of Bārakzay rule, it was clearly aimed at undermining the election of the Sadōzay, Aḥmad Shāh. Likewise, Fayz Muḥammad composed the *Sirāj al-tawārikh* under the auspices of the Bārakzay ruler, Amīr Ḥabīb Allāh (r. 1901–19), and closely follows Sulṭān Muḥammad's pro-Bārakzay narrative by suggesting that Aḥmad Shāh's election was dependent upon the consent of Ḥājji Jamāl Khān and the other Abdālī *amīrs*. These anachronisms affirm that Sulṭān Muḥammad's narrative in the *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī* is a retrospective re-interpretation of events clearly intended to legitimize the Bārakzay usurpation of rule from the Sadōzay.

The partisanship permeating such "Bārakzay" portraits of history has left an indelible mark on the historiography of contemporary Afghanistan.⁸⁸ Despite their biases, however, Sulṭān Muḥammad and Fayz Muḥammad are among the many authors who indicate that Aḥmad Shāh's accession was not based on consensus, even among members of the Abdālī confederacy. This view is also supported by 'Alī Muḥammad Khān. For instance, in his account of events that took place on the road to Qandahar after Nādir's death, he writes that several Abdālī appeared before Aḥmad Khān and asked, "The army has become leaderless. Since you are a Khwāja Khiṣr Khēl Sadōzay, why not follow you?" Aḥmad Khān replied that the troops were divided and no one would obey his command. Nevertheless they informed the standard-bearer to remain in front of Aḥmad Khān. When they traversed a few stages in this manner, more forces gathered under the banner of Aḥmad Khān. As 'Abd al-Ghanī Alakōzay did not approve of this arrangement, [Aḥmad] Khān dispatched a group of Abdālī to kill him in order to maintain unity within their ranks. When the party was rid of

⁸⁸ The *TSu* and *ST* have, since their publication, been widely propagated and even formed the narrative basis of the myth surrounding Aḥmad Shāh's "coronation" and, by extension, the very founding of Afghanistan.

this opposition and dissidence, the Abdālī contingent united under the command of Aḥmad Khān and made its way post haste to Qandahar, plundering villages along the way for supplies.⁸⁹

Upon reaching Qandahar, prominent Abdālī chiefs like Muḥabbat Khān Fōfalzay, Gadū Khān Fōfalzay, and Naṣr Allāh Nūrzay suggested waiting for one of the descendants of Sulṭān Khudaka to arrive and ascend the throne. But there was a consensus that a leader should be selected immediately to prevent strife in the region. Since Aḥmad Khān belonged to the same extended family as the Khudakas, and his brother had in the past led the Abdālī, they consented to his leadership. They also agreed that if a suitable candidate were to appear among the descendants of Sulṭān ‘Alī Muḥammad Khān, he would replace Aḥmad Khān. Those present acknowledged this pact by reciting a prayer and placed Aḥmad on the throne. But despite temporarily agreeing to his rule, many of the Abdālī chiefs came to rue this decision, for soon after being named shah, Aḥmad enacted policies intended to curb the influence of the confederacy, including executing dissidents.⁹⁰

‘Alī Muḥammad Khān’s account clearly represents a Khudaka-centric version of the event which poses noteworthy historiographical problems. Although it is possible that Sulṭān Khudādād’s descendants were considered viable candidates to rule, there is little evidence in support of this claim. Moreover, while there is a lack of consensus in the sources as to whether ‘Abd al-Ghanī was present with the Afghans on their march from Nādir’s camp to Qandahar, the absence of references in the Nādirid chronicles or early-Durrānī sources like the *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī* would appear to justify Sulṭān Muḥammad’s claim that ‘Abd al-Ghanī died in Nādir’s reign and that Nūr Muḥammad ‘Alizay subsequently replaced him as

⁸⁹ ‘Alī Muḥammad Khān, *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān*, fols. 74a–74b.

⁹⁰ ‘Alī Muḥammad Khān, *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān*, fols. 74b–75a, 75b–76a.

commander of the Abdālī.⁹¹ Notwithstanding these ambiguities in the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shāh*, ‘Alī Muḥammad Khān’s account of Aḥmad Shāh’s election reflects the fact that the decision to elect Aḥmad Khān as king did not go uncontested. Further to this point, an entry in a manuscript of a *tazkira* produced in the Herat region notes that Mullā Muḥammad, a local religious figure of some importance who was active during Aḥmad Shāh’s reign, refused to comply with the decision to elect Aḥmad Shāh.⁹²

A further indication that Aḥmad Shāh’s rule was contested may be detected in the unique account of events in the *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*. While Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī initially implies that all of the Durrānī leaders petitioned Aḥmad to become shah at Qandahar, he acknowledges that Aḥmad met with opposition soon thereafter. According to this account, after his accession Aḥmad demanded that all the chiefs, *amīrs*, and governors of the region pledge their allegiance to him. While many did so and were rewarded handsomely, others like Karam Khān Tarīnī in Fūshanj [Pūshang] (Baluchistan) and Maqṣūd Khān Barēchī in Shōrābak refused. In response to this display of insubordination, Aḥmad Shāh dispatched the Durrānī commanders Muḥabbat Khān and Mānū Khān to punish Karam Khān Tarīnī and Maqṣūd Khān Barēchī respectively. However, Muḥabbat and Mānū were among a group of Durrānī leaders—including Nūr Muḥammad ‘Alīzay, the commander of the Abdālī under Nādir Shāh, Miyān Dād Ishāqzay, and ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Bārakzay—who formed a secret alliance against Aḥmad Shāh. Muḥabbat and Mānū thus allied with the Tarīnī and Barēchī

⁹¹ Certain authors like ‘Alī Muḥammad Khān and ‘Abd al-Karīm “Bukhārī” indicate that Aḥmad murdered ‘Abd al-Ghanī on the route to Qandahar after Nādir’s assassination; see ‘Abd al-Karīm “Bukhārī,” *Histoire de l’Asie Centrale*, 1:8–9. According to Singh, the aforesaid *Tazkira* of Anand Ram Mukhlīṣ, a source which I have not had direct access to, also contains a reference to Aḥmad having ‘Abd al-Ghanī killed; see Singh, *Ahmad Shah Durrani*, 31n13. It is possible these authors mistakenly conflated ‘Abd al-Ghanī with Nūr Muḥammad, the Abdālī chief whom we know Aḥmad did arrange to have executed.

⁹² For details about this manuscript, see Muḥammad Anwar Nayyir, “Risāla-i tārīkhī-i Mullā ‘Azīz al-Dīn,” *Āryānā* 28, no. 6 (1349 H.sh./1970): 49–50; Wakīlī Pōpalza’ī, *Aḥmad Shāh*, 45–47.

with the tacit support of Nūr Muḥammad, Miyān Dād, and ‘Abd al-Raḥmān, who remained in Qandahar with Aḥmad Shāh. Shortly thereafter, Nawāb Khān Alakōzay and several other soldiers who had been sent with Muḥabbat and Mānū learned of the plot, covertly made their way to the Durrānī ruler, and informed him about the conspiracy. After verifying Nawāb Khān’s intelligence, Aḥmad Shāh punished Nūr Muḥammad and Miyān Dād for their treachery by having them trampled to death by elephants. He was, however, compelled to spare ‘Abd al-Raḥmān and even elevated him to the rank of Head of the Heavy Artillery (*tūpchī bāshī*).⁹³ Aḥmad Shāh and the forces that remained loyal to him defeated the forces of Muḥabbat and Mānū outside of Qandahar. Muḥabbat, Mānū, and another Durrānī co-conspirator, Gadū Khān, were then imprisoned and never heard of again.⁹⁴

Based on fragments of information gleaned from the aforesaid primary sources, the following may be regarded as a balanced reconstruction of events leading up to and immediately following Aḥmad Shāh’s accession: On the way from Khabūshān to Qandahar, the Abdālī leaders present agreed to elect Aḥmad as their leader as a means to maintain unity in the face of possible opposition from Nādir’s officers at Qandahar. The sources are not in agreement as to whether Aḥmad’s election was intended to be permanent or simply an ad-hoc measure until a larger assembly could be convened. Upon reaching Qandahar, Aḥmad and his supporters caught Nādir’s representatives unaware and captured a large sum

⁹³ Aḥmad Shāh’s leniency towards ‘Abd al-Raḥmān seems suspicious especially considering his harsh treatment of the other Durrānī khans who plotted against him. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān’s subsequent elevation in rank seems to suggest that he played some role in the apprehension and execution of Nūr Muḥammad and Miyān Dād.

⁹⁴ Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, ed. Murādōf, 1:25b–35b. Another account of the insurrection and subsequent execution of Nūr Muḥammad, Muḥabbat, and Gadū is given in Muḥammad Mustajāb, *Gulistān-i Raḥmat*, fols. 99a–99b. Later authors like Sulṭān Muḥammad and Fayḏ Muḥammad describe what appears to be an alternate version of the insurrection, though the names and dates they provide differ slightly from those recorded by Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī; see Sulṭān Muḥammad, *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī*, 127–28; Fayḏ Muḥammad, *The History of Afghanistan*, 1:19–20; also see Singh, *Ahmad Shah Durrani*, 81–82. These later accounts appear to be a garbled version of the plot led by Nūr Muḥammad and his co-conspirators.

of money destined for the Nādirid court. Aḥmad's role in the capture of the Nādirid treasury seems to have bolstered his claims to leadership, for, in a subsequent assembly convened by the Abdālī chiefs, likely at the site of Nādirābād, Aḥmad secured the allegiance of a core faction of supporters through the distribution of largesse.⁹⁵ This faction consisted of Abdālī-Durrānī and other chiefs who may have decided to elect him as ruler on the way to Qandahar and who, in return for their loyalty to him at that critical juncture, could expect regular rewards in cash and kind.⁹⁶ It is often assumed that Aḥmad was crowned as shah at an elaborate ceremony that was met with widespread approval. But while Aḥmad Shāh was eventually able to assert his authority and consolidate power thanks to the support of a loyal faction of Abdālī-Durrānī supporters, various sources indicate that rival Abdālī chiefs as well as Tarīnī, Barēchī, and Ghilzay dissidents opposed his rule. In the absence of information about the exact nature of their grievances, we may assume that they would have had concerns about their status in Aḥmad's nascent polity, or may simply have desired to maintain their autonomy. Whatever the case, after suppressing dissent through both conciliation and brute force, Aḥmad, with his loyal band of supporters, now styled "Durrānī," proceeded to stake his claim to the eastern territories of Nādir's empire, especially the important revenue-producing regions of Kabul, Peshawar, and especially the Punjab. Thus was the Durrānī imperial project set in motion.

⁹⁵ The primary sources frequently discuss Aḥmad Shāh securing the loyalty of his supporters by distributing lofty titles, jeweled diadems, robes of honour, and other awards to them. For examples, see Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, ed. Murādōf, 1:24a–25a; Imām al-Dīn, *Ḥusayn Shāhī*, fols. 16a–16b; ‘Alī Muḥammad Khān, *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shāh*, fols. 75a–75b; and Sulṭān Muḥammad, *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī*, 124–25.

⁹⁶ Singh, *Ahmad Shah Durrani*, 27–28n, endorses the view that Aḥmad Shāh's election was likely secured prior to his arrival at Qandahar.

Prohibition of the Use of the Name “Abdālī”

The tensions surrounding Aḥmad Shāh’s election provide valuable insights into aspects of his rule that have usually been overlooked in both the primary sources and the scholarly literature. A pertinent example is the fact that Aḥmad Shāh not only adopted the name Durrānī for his tribal confederacy, but simultaneously prohibited use of the old name “Abdālī.” In the court chronicle *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, the name “Abdālī” is entirely omitted; even when describing Aḥmad Shāh’s Abdālī ancestors and predecessors, Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī consistently refers to them as “Durrānī.”⁹⁷ In fact, practically all official documents produced at the court of Aḥmad Shāh avoid the use of the tribal name “Abdālī” altogether.⁹⁸

Further evidence of the prohibition of the use of the name “Abdālī” is supplied in the following poem attributed to Aḥmad Shāh’s grand *wazīr*, Shāh Walī Khān:

The King of the Faith (i.e., Aḥmad Shāh) arrived at “the Established Abode”
On account of his arrival, Qandahar became

Like a pleasantly-scented rose-garden
A hundred salutations arrived in the language of heaven

From that point on, in accordance with his order,
He gave the Abdālī another name

⁹⁷ Tarzi, “*Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*,” 91.

⁹⁸ The absence of the name Abdālī in documents produced at the Durrānī court seems to indicate that Aḥmad Shāh prohibited its use. However, it should be noted that while the name “Durrānī” subsequently gained widespread currency, Aḥmad Shāh’s effort to eliminate the use of the old tribal name “Abdālī” was not completely successful, as there is evidence of its continued use during his reign, primarily among authors writing outside of Durrānī court settings. These authors may simply have been unaware of the prohibition of the use of “Abdālī” or, if aware, were not compelled to dispense with the use of the older and more common name Abdālī. There is also no indication that Aḥmad Shāh’s successors continued to prohibit the use of Abdālī, perhaps because, by their reigns, the threat posed by members of the old aristocracy had long since dissipated, thereby eliminating the need to uphold the prohibition. Any combination of these factors would explain the continued use of “Abdālī” in non-court sources written during and after Aḥmad Shāh’s reign.

He ordered: "They are to be called Durrānī
And henceforth not be called Abdālī

Should someone say 'Durrānī is Abdālī'
His head is empty of intellect and wisdom

Our glory is not derived from lineage
Our glory is derived from the grace of the Creator

The bejeweled sword can boast of itself
For it possesses the jewel of intrinsic value

It is by the decree of the Omnipotent, Eternal Lord
That I have changed the name of the Abdālī"

*Shah-i dīn biyāmad bi-dār al-qarār
bi-gardīd az maqdam-ash Qandahār*

*bi-misl-i gulistān-i ambar sirisht
rasad šad salām az zabān-i bihisht*

*wa zān pas bi naḥwī ki farmūda būd
bi-Abdāliyān nām-i dīgar namūd*

*bi-farmūd gūyand Durrāniyān
wa zān pas na-gūyand Abdāliyān*

*Durrānī ar gūyand Abdālī ast
sar-i ū zi 'aql o khirad khālī ast*

*nadārīm mā az nasab iftikhār
būd fakhr-i mā faẓl-i parwardigār*

*kunad fakhr tīgh-i mujawhar bi-kh^wīsh
ki ān rā buwad jawhar-i zāt bīsh*

daham nām-i Abdāliyān ham taghyīr
*bi-ḥukm-i ḥakīm-i qadīm-i qadīr*⁹⁹

The poem indicates that Aḥmad Shāh introduced the name Durrānī in place of Abdālī upon his arrival to Qandahar. Another explicit reference to the prohibition of the use of the name “Abdālī” appears in the form of an apocryphal account in the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān*: On a visit to the Abdālī burial site of Rawzat Bāgh in Herat,¹⁰⁰ Aḥmad Shāh noticed that the tombs of his extended relatives ‘Abd Allāh and Asad Allāh had fallen into disrepair and he ordered for their restoration. A member of his retinue asked if it would not be more beneficial to build a monument over the grave of his father, Zamān Khān, which was also located at Rawzat Bāgh. Aḥmad Shāh is said to have replied: “The existence of my kingship is a bequest (*ṣadaqa*) from these two tombs. Had it not been for these two lions (i.e., ‘Abd Allāh and Asad Allāh), all Abdālī would still be shepherding in the mountains.” Aḥmad Shāh had previously prohibited the use of the name Abdālī and decreed that anyone who uttered it—whether intentionally or not—would be subject to a fine (*jarīmāna*). When he used the name “Abdālī” in his speech, the khans complained: “The shah has uttered that which he had

⁹⁹ This poem from the *Tārīkh-i Shāh Walī Khān wazīr* is recorded in Wakīlī Pōpalza’ī, *Tīmūr Shāh Durrānī*, 1:23; Wakīlī Pōpalza’ī, *Aḥmad Shāh*, 64–65; Ḥusayn Barzigar, “Aḥmad Shāh Durrānī,” in Ḥasan Anūsha, ed., *Dānīshnāma-i adab-i fārsī*, vol. 3, *Adab-i fārsī dar Afghānistān* (Tehran: Wizārat-i Farhang wa Irshād-i Islāmī, 1378 H.sh./1999), 49. Part of this poem has been translated in Tarzi, “*Tārīkh-i Ahmad Shahi*,” 91–92. I would like to express my gratitude to Amin Tarzi for pointing this poem out to me and to my colleague Abolfazl Moshiri for his assistance with its translation.

¹⁰⁰ Rawzat Bāgh is the site where many of the Abdālī rulers of pre-Nādirid Herat, including Aḥmad Shāh’s father, Muḥammad Zamān Khān, were buried. Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī gives the district in which Rawzat Bāgh is located the spelling kh.lj.ā.n; see Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, ed. Murādōf, 2:610b. For more on Rawzat Bāgh, see Adamec, *Historical and Political Gazetteer of Afghanistan*, 3:341.

forbidden.” After contemplating the matter, Aḥmad Shāh conciliated the khans by treating them to a lavish feast.¹⁰¹

These passages are among several in the primary sources that demonstrate that Aḥmad Shāh’s adoption of the title Durrānī was accompanied by a prohibition of the use of the name Abdālī.¹⁰² But it is curious that none of the sources provide a clear explanation for the prohibition. Such ambiguity raises the question: Why did Aḥmad Shāh dispense with the old name of his tribe? Tarzi has recently posited that Aḥmad Shāh may have avoided using the name Abdālī, which was of limited currency, because “his intention was not to be a local Abdali chief, but rather to be king of an expanding imperial domain.”¹⁰³ But while Aḥmad Shāh’s adoption of the title Durrānī was certainly linked to his imperial objectives, his desire to ruler over an empire does not explain why he prohibited the use of the name “Abdālī” altogether. It may be posited that there were more pressing reasons for him to do so.

Pre-Islamic Origins of the Name Abdālī

As noted in Chapter 2, Imām al-Dīn, who was writing in the late eighteenth century, asserted that the patron saint of the town of Chisht in Herat, Abū Aḥmad Abdāl, had bestowed his personal epithet on the putative ancestor of the Abdālī, thereby implying that a direct and intimate relationship existed between the Abdālī *ulūs* and the Chishtī Order since the tenth century. Although Imām al-Dīn’s claim is often accepted as fact, it is not corroborated by any known sources that predate the *Ḥusayn Shāhī*. This includes sources

¹⁰¹ ‘Alī Muḥammad Khān, *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān*, fols. 88b–89a. Note that the TMA preserves this utterance attributed to Aḥmad Shāh in its Pashto form, though it is accompanied by an internlinear Persian translation.

¹⁰² As Singh points out, Nizām al-Dīn and Ṭahmās Khān are among the other contemporary authors that refer to the name change; see Singh, *Ahmad Shah Durrani*, 31n16; Siyālkōtī, *Shāhnāma-i Aḥmadī*, fol. 132b; Ṭahmās Bēg Khān, *Ṭahmās-nāma*, ed. Aslam, 46.

¹⁰³ Tarzi, “*Tarikh-i Ahmad Shahi*,” 92–93.

produced in the reign of Aḥmad Shāh that frequently describe his affiliation with the Mujaddidī-Naqshbandī Sufi Order (discussed further below) but offer no such details about the special relationship of the ruler, or his tribe, with the Chishtī Sufi Order. This raises several important questions about Imām al-Dīn's claim, not least of which are: If the name Abdālī did in fact derive from the epithet of the tenth-century Chishtī saint, Abū Aḥmad Abdāl, why would Aḥmad Shāh not exploit its religious capital instead of prohibiting its use? Moreover, why does Imām al-Dīn fail to note Aḥmad Shāh prohibition of the use of the name "Abdālī"? As argued in Chapter 2, one possible answer to these and related questions is that rather than representing an authoritative account about early Abdālī history, Imām al-Dīn appears to have invented the Chishtī saint's connection to the Abdālī-Durrānī as a way to strengthen the historical claims of his patron, Zamān Shāh, to rightful authority over Herat (where Chisht is located) in direct response to the irredentist claims of the Qājārs to the province beginning in the late eighteenth century.¹⁰⁴

In addition to emphasizing the necessity of reading Imām al-Dīn's chronicle in the context of the Qājār-Durrānī rivalry over Herat, Chapter 2 also highlighted the obscurity surrounding the origins of the name Abdālī and the theory, postulated by several authors, that it may be connected to Hephthalite groups that had migrated to the area of the Sulaymān Range in ancient times. The presence of non-Muslim groups in the region is alluded to in the introduction to the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i 'ālī-shān*, which hints at the pre-Islamic roots of the Afghan homeland of Kasēghar, or the Sulaymān Range, and the Pashto

¹⁰⁴ As noted earlier in this dissertation, it was common historically for Muslim rulers to associate themselves with local shrines and saintly figures for personal and/or political ends. A well-known example is of the Timurid ruler, Sulṭān-Ḥusayn Bayqara, who supported the project of reviving the shrine of Khwāja 'Abd Allāh Anṣārī, the patron saint of Herat (*Pīr-i Harāt*), which subsequently became a popular pilgrimage site in the province. Moreover, Sulṭān-Ḥusayn even claimed descent from 'Abd Allāh Anṣārī. For further details see Subtelny, "The Cult of 'Abdullāh Anṣārī under the Timurids," 388–91.

language spoken there. ‘Alī Muḥammad Khān states that the area was cleansed of unbelievers by the “Israelite” Afghans who introduced [proto-]Islam there and adopted the local language of Pashto supposedly in place of their native Hebrew. While clearly apocryphal, the account indicates that memory, however vague, of the region’s pre-Islamic past survived well into the nineteenth century.¹⁰⁵ Likewise, it is conceivable that the name “Abdālī” was still linked to the remote, pre-Islamic era at the time of Aḥmad Shāh’s accession. The pre-Islamic roots of the name Abdālī, as well as the negative implications such an association evoked, would explain why Aḥmad Shāh did not specify why the name was outlawed and simply intimated that God had decreed its prohibition. It would also explain why Aḥmad Shāh, perhaps in emulation of the Prophet Muḥammad who disassociated himself from his kinsmen still embedded in the social order associated with the era of “ignorance” (*jāhiliyya*) and ushered in the Islamic religio-political order, sought to sever ties with the Abdālī past by adopting the tribal name “Durrānī,” which signaled the start of his new ruling dispensation mandated by divine decree.

Intra-tribal Conflict among the Abdālī

The highly contentious politics that plagued the Abdālī *ulūs* in the decades leading up to Aḥmad Shāh’s reign may provide further insight into his concern with distancing himself from the Abdālī past as well as his motivations for adopting the tribal name “Durrānī.” As previous chapters of this dissertation have aimed to show, the leadership of the Abdālī *ulūs* had been contested from at least the mid-seventeenth century. During the periods of Safavid and Mughal rule in Qandahar, the representatives of both states employed chiefs of local tribal confederacies, like the Abdālī, to serve their local interests. These policies often resulted in rival chiefs vying with one another for paramount leadership of a tribe. A similar

¹⁰⁵ ‘Alī Muḥammad Khān, *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shāh*, fols. 3b–6a.

policy was instituted by Nādir Shāh who elevated non-chiefly individuals like ‘Abd al-Ghanī and Nūr Muḥammad Khān to high rank, while simultaneously curbing the influence of individuals like Aḥmad Khān, whose ancestors had been recognized as leaders of the Abdālī confederacy in the pre-Nādirid period.

Nādir’s attempts at shifting the balance of power within the *ulūs* were intended to ensure the loyalty of the chiefs he promoted. An important byproduct of Nādir’s policy, however, was that it created conflict among the leading members of the Abdālī confederacy. For instance, Muḥammad Kāẓim notes that when Nādir appointed ‘Abd al-Ghanī as chief of the Abdālī faction in his army, Mūsā Khān refused to serve as his subordinate, as a result of which he was executed. The fact that the Abdālī resented serving ‘Abd al-Ghanī is also indicated by the following account in the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān*: Several years after Allāh Yār Khān, the former Abdālī ruler of Herat, was exiled to Multan, he re-joined Nādir’s retinue during the latter’s invasion of India. One day he encountered ‘Abd al-Ghanī but refused to address him as “khan.” Displeased, ‘Abd al-Ghanī complained to Nādir about this act of insubordination. Nādir then told Allāh Yār that because ‘Abd al-Ghanī had been awarded the title “khan,” he should refer to him as such. Allāh Yār replied, “I will never refer to Ghanī as khan; if he is not agreeable he, too, may address me only as Allāh Yār.”¹⁰⁶ As described earlier, the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān* also includes a passage about ‘Abd al-Ghanī supplying Aḥmad with incompetent soldiers, an insult that resulted in Aḥmad bitterly complaining about ‘Abd al-Ghanī to Nādir.

¹⁰⁶ ‘Alī Muḥammad Khān, *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān*, fols. 72b–73b. According to the *TMA*, after discovering a plot against his life, Nādir Shāh had Allāh Yār Khān, one of the plot’s suspected masterminds, poisoned; Allāh Yār’s body was then sent to Herat where he was buried alongside his kin at Rawḥat Bāgh. Note that the *TMA*’s version of events is contradicted by another tradition that Nādir had Allāh Yār killed several years earlier in Sabzawār; see Leech, “An Account of the Early Abdalees,” 469.

Such accounts highlight the fact that Nādir's efforts to shift the balance of power within the confederacy created divisions among the Abdālī that after his death resulted in a complex competition for the leadership of the confederacy. We have already referred to the example of Nūr Muḥammad Khān 'Alīzay and the Pōpalzay khans Muḥabbat, Mānū, and Gadū forming an alliance against Aḥmad and his supporters. Because Nādir appointed all of these individuals to important posts in Qandahar, we may presume that, based on their high ranks in the Nādirid period, they challenged Aḥmad's right to rule, hence their acts of hostility towards the Durrānī monarch that cost them their lives.¹⁰⁷ If 'Alī Muḥammad Khān is to be believed, the Khudaka Sadōzay, who asserted legitimacy on account of their descent from the former Abdālī chief, Sulṭān Khudādād, may have aspired to rule after Nādir as well and to inherit what they regarded to be their rightful positions as leaders of the confederacy.

The *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī* offers further evidence that Aḥmad Shāh's fellow clansmen and close relatives often challenged his right to rule. An example is the revolt led by his nephew, Luqmān Khān b. Zū al-Faqār Khān, who had been among the Afghan soldiers stationed in western Iran towards the end of Nādir's reign. In 1162/1749–50, soon after learning of Aḥmad Shāh's accession, Luqmān Khān and other Afghan soldiers came to Qandahar. Aḥmad Shāh subsequently awarded his nephew the prestigious title Khān-i Khānān, or "chief of chiefs," and the governorship of Qandahar. Upon returning from the India campaign of 1164/1751–52, however, Aḥmad Shāh received news that Luqmān Khān

¹⁰⁷ In the *Bayān-i wāqī'* we read that Gadū Khān was supposed to accompany Nūr Muḥammad Khān in transferring the Nādirid treasury from Qandahar to Mashhad before Aḥmad Shāh's forces confiscated it; see 'Abd al-Karīm Kashmīrī, *Bayān-i wāqī'*, 186. Muḥammad Mustajāb adds that Nādir awarded the posts of Overseer of the Citadel (*qal'a-dārī*), Chief of Intelligence (*khavar-dārī*), and Commander (*sar-dārī*) in Qandahar to Nūr Muḥammad, Muḥabbat, and Gadū, though he does not clearly specify to whom each post was assigned; see Muḥammad Mustajāb, *Gulistān-i Raḥmat*, fol. 99a.

had revolted and was holding his son, Tīmūr, and womenfolk captive in Qandahar.¹⁰⁸ Luqmān Khān also funded a large militia with money from the imperial treasury and notified officials in the neighbouring lands of his revolt. In an ensuing battle at Qandahar, “through the assistance of divine grace,” Aḥmad Shāh’s forces defeated and detained Luqmān Khān. Aḥmad Shāh decided to spare his nephew but had many of his co-conspirators, including his revenue agent Būstān Khān Fōfālzay, executed.¹⁰⁹ The *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī* depicts Luqmān Khān as having been goaded into rebellion by enemies of the ruler. It is also entirely plausible that, as the son of Zū al-Faqār Khān, the former Abdālī leader and elder brother of Aḥmad Shāh, Luqmān Khān regarded himself as the rightful inheritor of rule and intended to supplant Aḥmad Shāh on this basis.

One of the remarkable controversies that occurred during Aḥmad Shāh’s reign was the betrayal of his grand *wazīr*, Shāh Walī Khān, a member of the Ṣālīḥzay-Bāmīzay branch of the Pōpalzay clan. This was a somewhat puzzling development because Shāh Walī Khān had been among the closest companions of Aḥmad Shāh and a devoted supporter since the latter’s time in the service of Nādir. On account of the great trust Aḥmad Shāh placed in him, Shāh Walī Khān was appointed grand *wazīr*, which, next to the monarchy itself, was the highest rank in the Durrānī polity. Nevertheless, towards the end of Aḥmad Shāh’s reign, just as his health began to deteriorate, Shāh Walī Khān tried to usurp the throne. Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī relates an account on the authority of a trustworthy informant, Ḥasan Khān Bārakzay, according to which Shāh Walī Khān attempted to “elevate” his own ancestry to the “soaring heights” of the Sadōzay lineage. He did so by claiming that Aḥmad Shāh’s

¹⁰⁸ Ghubār, Sarkar, Singh, and others place this revolt in the year 1748; see Sarkar, “Ahmad Shah Abdali in India, 1748,” 232; Ghubār, *Aḥmad Shāh Bābā-yi Afghān*, 203–4; and Singh, *Ahmad Shah Durrani*, 69–70. This date is presumably derived from Gulistāna, who states that this revolt took place towards the end of Aḥmad Shāh’s first campaign in India in 1160–61/1747–48; see Gulistāna, *Mujmal al-tawārīkh*, ed. Mudarris-Raḥawī, 91–92.

¹⁰⁹ Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, ed. Murādōf, 1:101a–2b, 1:116b, 1:170a–72a.

ancestor, Sadō, was a full brother (*barādar-i ṣulbī*) of his own ancestor, Ṣāliḥ; on the basis of his close genealogical ties to the ruler, Shāh Walī Khān regarded himself as entitled to carry out all affairs of religion and state (*tamāmī-i umūr-i dīn wa dawlat*). In addition to his genealogical claim, Shāh Walī Khān also asserted that it was his prerogative to replace Aḥmad Shāh as ruler since he was responsible for managing all the affairs of the Durrānī state. The *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī* records the following poem outlining the grandiose claims that Shāh Walī Khān allegedly issued in the presence of fellow Durrānī soldiers:

Were it not for my involvement in matters
The affairs of the world would lose their splendour

Through my efforts affairs achieve orderliness
The visage of the entire world turns to me

If I were to skip over a single page of this book
Endless unrest and rebellion would be the result

Unless I wanted the circumstances to be otherwise
The dominion that has no end would succumb to decay

While Sadō procured vicegerency
Ṣāliḥ was a brother to him as well

May dominion also reach the sons of Ṣāliḥ
Sovereignty is exercised by whoever is fit

Although the fame-seeking King of Kings (i.e., Aḥmad Shāh) is
A rose from the rose-garden of the pure family of Sadō

My lineage, too, extents back to Ṣāliḥ
Qualifying me to sit upon the throne of kingship

I am not lacking in ability when it comes to this mandate

For I, in the most complete sense, possess the [necessary] trappings

*nabāshad agar pāy-i man dar miyān
zi rawnaq fitad kārḥā-yi jahān*

*girifta zi man kārḥā inṭizām
buwad sū-yi man rūy-i ‘ālam tamām*

*waraq gar bigardānam az īn kitāb
basā rukh dahad fitna wa inqilāb*

*nakh^wāham ki gardad digar-gūn ḥāl
pazīrad khalal dawlat-i bī-zawāl*

*khilāfat agarchi namūda Sadō
barādar buwad nīz Ṣāliḥ bi-ū*

*bi-Ṣāliḥza’ī nīz dawlat rasad
kunad salṭanat har ki lāyiq buwad*

*agar hast shāhanshah-i nām-jū
gul-i gulshan-i āl-i pāk-i Sadō*

*marā ham bi-Ṣāliḥ nasab mīrasad
nishastan bi-takht-i shahī mīsazad*

*nadāram dar īn kār man pāy kam
ki asbāb dāram bi-wajh-i atamm¹¹⁰*

The author Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī subsequently includes verses in defense of his royal patron. After pointing out that each of the *wazīr*’s accomplishments derived solely from Aḥmad Shāh, he writes:

¹¹⁰ Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, ed. Murādōf, 2:568b.

Kingship is in the hands of God
To bequeath upon whomever He will

No one acquires kingship as an inheritance
Kingship is attained through providence, nothing else

Not every gem is fit for a crown
Not every limb of the body can replace the head

The person to whom good fortune bids adieu
He chooses to dispute with kings

buwad pādshāhī bi-dast-i khudā
bi-har kas ki kh^wāhad numāyad ‘aṭā

bi-mīrās shāhī nakarda ast kas
buwad pādshāhī bi-ṭāli[‘] wa bas

na har gawharī lāyiq-i afsar ast
na har ‘uẓw dar tan bi-jāy-i sar ast

kasī rā ki dawlat numāyad widā[‘]
bi-shāhanshahān ū guzīnad nizā^{c111}

After chastising Shāh Walī Khān for his hubris, Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī goes on to write that prince Tīmūr, one of Shāh Walī Khān’s fiercest rivals at the Durrānī court, notified his father of the *wazīr*’s infidelity in 1178/1764–65. Aḥmad Shāh dismissed Shāh Walī Khān from the *wazīrate* and demoted him to the post of military commander (*sipāh-sālār*)—a rank he held in name only. The disgraced *wazīr* was no longer given a say in affairs of state, nor was he permitted access to the Records Office (*daftar khāna*). Aḥmad Shāh replaced him as grand *wazīr* with another of his close associates, Mullā Idrīs Khān, who had hitherto occupied the

¹¹¹ Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, ed. Murādōf, 36b.

offices of Shaykh al-Islam and the Military Judge (*qāzī-i ‘askar*) at the royal court;¹¹² however, the latter passed away soon thereafter in 1179/1766. Since Shāh Walī Khān faithfully carried out the ruler’s commands in the intervening years and repented for his past misdeeds, Aḥmad Shāh reinstated him as grand *wazīr* in 1182/1769.¹¹³

When analyzing Abdālī history from a broader perspective, it becomes apparent that the leadership of the confederacy had been plagued by internecine conflict since at least the seventeenth century when the Safavid and Mughal states vied for control of Qandahar. Intra-tribal discord persisted into the era of autonomous Abdālī rule in Herat in the early eighteenth century when various chieftains fought for supremacy of the confederacy and it further intensified in the reign of Nādir Shāh who deposed the old leaders of the confederacy and appointed new ones in their place. The contentious nature of the confederacy’s history in the pre-Durrānī period gave rise to an intense competition among many Abdālī chieftains to fill the power vacuum created by Nādir Shāh’s assassination.

Aḥmad Shāh was very much a product of the conflict-ridden history of the Abdālī confederacy to which he belonged and he therefore had firsthand knowledge of the devastating potential of intra-tribal rivalries. It will be remembered that rival kinsmen killed his father, Muḥammad Zamān Khān, during the period of Abdālī rule in Herat. The *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* shows how such intra-tribal rivalries, which can actually be traced back to the Safavid period, also led to the killing of his grandfather, Dawlat Khān. Such conflicts were commonplace in the Abdālī confederacy in the decades leading up to Aḥmad Shāh’s accession and offer a compelling motive for his decision to change the name of his tribe

¹¹² Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, ed. Murādōf, 1:36b; 2:563b–70b; 2:606a–6b. On the offices of Shaykh al-Islam and Military Judge, with special reference to the Safavid context, see Jābirī-Anṣārī, *Mīrzā Raḡfī’ā’s Dastūr al-mulūk*, trans. Marcinkowski, 86–88, 268–81; Minorsky, *Tadhkirat al-mulūk*, 42–43, 110–12.

¹¹³ Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, ed. Murādōf, 2:563b–70b; 2:606a–6b.

from Abdālī to Durrānī. By prohibiting the use of the old name “Abdālī” and insisting on the use of “Durrānī” instead, Aḥmad Shāh may have sought to suppress memory of his tribe’s contentious past, while simultaneously neutralizing the threats posed by rival Abdālī chiefs who could in theory—and often did in practice—challenge his right to rule, in many cases based on their prominent standing in the confederacy in pre-Durrānī times. In short, whereas membership in the *ulūs* had traditionally been based on descent from a common putative ancestor named “Abdāl,” in the new “Durrānī” dispensation, membership in the *ulūs* was predicated on loyalty and service to its founder, Aḥmad Shāh Durr-i Durrān.

6.4: The Regnal Epithet Durr-i Durrān and Its Esoteric Significance

The Epithet Durr-i Durrān as Represented in the Secondary Literature

The analysis above points to the key political motives for Aḥmad Shāh’s decision to change the name of the confederacy from Abdālī to Durrānī, which was derived from his personal epithet, Durr-i Durrān, or “Pearl of Pearls.” But an important question that remains unanswered is, why pearls? Myriad theories have been posited as to the meaning and significance of this mysterious regnal title. Nineteenth-century authors like Leech, Ḥayāt Khān, and others appear to have been the first to suggest that Ṣābir Shāh had advised Aḥmad Shāh to adopt the name Durr-i Dawrān, or “Pearl of the Age,” at the time of his accession, which he later changed to Durr-i Durrān, or “Pearl of Pearls.”¹¹⁴ Colonial authors, including Raverty and his followers, opined that the Abdālī adopted the epithet “Pearl of Pearls” on account of their habit of wearing pearl earrings.¹¹⁵ While Bellew initially echoed

¹¹⁴ Leech, “An Account of the Early Abdalees,” 470; Ḥayāt Khān, *Ḥayāt-i Afghānī*, 129; Fayḏ Muḥammad, *The History of Afghanistan*, 1:14; Ghubār, *Aḥmad Shāh Bābā-yi Afghān*, 56–58.

¹¹⁵ Although this opinion was adopted and propagated by Raverty and other later authors writing in English, it received earlier expression in an article on Aḥmad Shāh by Henry Vansittart that may well have been the source for Raverty’s assertion; see Henry Vansittart, “The Life of Ahmed Shah: King of the Abdallies, who are

Raverty's view, he later speculated that by adopting the name Durrānī, Aḥmad Shāh, in fact, resuscitated the name of a tribe referred to in ancient Greek sources as "Drangai" who were based in the land of Drangiana, or present-day Zaranj, in Sistan.¹¹⁶

Several twentieth-century authors claimed that the tribal name Durrānī predated Aḥmad Shāh. Tate, for instance, asserts that the name Durrānī appears in the *Shāhjahān-nāma*, written about the reign of the Mughal emperor Shāh Jahān (r. 1037–68/1628–58).¹¹⁷ Ḥabībī also maintains that the name Durrānī was used in the *ʿAmal-i Ṣāliḥ*, also written for Shāh Jahān.¹¹⁸ Vartan Gregorian refers in passing to an obscure Persian manuscript that is supposed to show "that the Afghans in the region of Herat were known as Durrānī long before Aḥmad Khān ascended to the throne."¹¹⁹

In his article written in part to clarify some of the ambiguities and misconceptions surrounding the name "Durrānī," Wakīlī Pōpalza'ī offers two explanations for its adoption. First, he alleges that when the famous *kōh-i nūr* (lit. "Mountain of Light") diamond fell to the

also called Duranees, from a Custom of Wearing a Pearl in One of their Ears (Extracted from the Asiatic Miscellany, published in Calcutta.)," *Asiatic Annual Register, for the Year 1799* (1800): 18. Henry George Raverty, *Selections from the Poetry of the Afghāns, from the Sixteenth to the Nineteenth Century, Literally Translated from the Original Pushto* (London, 1867), 287n; also see Henry Walter Bellew, *The Races of Afghanistan: Being a Brief Account of the Principal Nations Inhabiting that Country* (London, 1880), 30–31; Ghulām Ḥasan Ṣamīn Bilgrāmī, "Ahmad Shah Abdali and the Indian Wazir ʿImad-ul-Mulk (1756–1757)," trans. William Irvine, *Indian Antiquary, a Journal of Oriental Research* 36 (1907): 63n; Adamec, *Historical and Political Gazetteer of Afghanistan*, 5:142; Caroe, *The Pathans*, 256; Noelle, *State and Tribe*, 231.

¹¹⁶ Bellew, *An Inquiry into the Ethnography of Afghanistan*, 157–63.

¹¹⁷ Tate, *The Kingdom of Afghanistan*, 19. Tate may have had in mind the *ʿAmal-i Ṣāliḥ*, which is also known by the alternate title *Shāhjahān-nāma*.

¹¹⁸ ʿAṭā Muḥammad Shikārpūrī, *Tāza nawā-yi maʿārik*, ed. ʿAbd al-Ḥayy Ḥabībī (Karachi: Sindhī Adabī Board, 1959), 770n2. As Ḥabībī notes in another article, the term d.r.ā.n.ī in the *ʿAmal-i Ṣāliḥ* is spelled d.ū.r.ā.n.ī (i.e., Dawrānī) in ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd Lāhōrī's *Bādshāh-nāma*. See Ḥabībī, "Da Abdāliyānū Mashāhīr," 217. It should be stressed that these terms found in the Mughal chronicles are used as part of a personal name and not in relation to the Abdālī.

¹¹⁹ Gregorian, *The Emergence of Modern Afghanistan*, 30n; Noelle, *State and Tribe*, 231.

Afghans, they proudly referred to it as the “Pearl of Pearls” (*durr-i durrān*). And since Aḥmad Shāh was the most noble and exalted of the Afghans, they also called him “Pearl of Pearls.” Second, Wakīlī Pōpalzaʿī suggests that the title *Durr-i Durrān* was used in a limited capacity at the onset of Aḥmad Shāh’s reign but was adopted officially only after the accession of Aḥmad Shāh Bahādur in 1161/1748 in order to distinguish him from his Mughal counterpart.¹²⁰

These are some of the main explanations posited for the adoption of this epithet, but most are unsatisfactory.¹²¹ Ḥayāt Khān’s assertion that “*Durr-i Durrān*” was merely an adaptation of “*Durr-i Dawrān*” not only lacks supporting evidence from sources dating back to Aḥmad Shāh’s lifetime, it fails to explain why the ruler was compelled to adopt the variant “Pearl of Pearls” or its relevance. Raverty and his followers also offer no proof that the Abdālī either wore pearl earrings or that Aḥmad Shāh renamed his entire tribe based on this dubious habit. Likewise, there is no reason to suppose that the term *Durrān*—which is the Persian plural form of the Arabic *durr* meaning “pearl”—was used in reference to the Abdālī or any other tribe prior to the reign of Aḥmad Shāh. And despite Wakīlī Pōpalzaʿī’s claims of having special knowledge about the *Durrānī*, he does not substantiate the statements that the Afghans of Aḥmad Shāh’s time referred to the *kōh-i nūr* as “*Durr-i Durrān*” or that this diamond was linked to the ruler’s adoption of the new title.¹²² Likewise, the suggestion that he sought to distinguish himself from the Mughal Aḥmad Shāh is

¹²⁰ Wakīlī Pōpalzaʿī, “Intiqād bar maqāla-i ‘Abdālī, Sadōzāʿī wa *Durrānī*,” 228–30; Wakīlī Pōpalzaʿī, *Timūr Shāh Durrānī*, 1:43, 2:641; Wakīlī Pōpalzaʿī, *Aḥmad Shāh*, 64.

¹²¹ On the topic of Aḥmad Shāh adopting the royal epithet *Durr-i Durrān*, and various theories postulated for this name change, also see Ghubār, *Aḥmad Shāh Bābā-yi Afghān*, 55–58.

¹²² Although sometimes used colloquially to mean “jewel” in a generic sense, the Arabic noun “*durr*” literally means “pearl.” The plural form “*durrān*” (i.e. pearls) consists of the singular Arabic noun “*durr*” and the Persian plural suffix *-ān*. As diamonds are referred to as *almās* (singular) in Arabic and Persian, it is doubtful the *kōh-i nūr* diamond would have been referred to as a “pearl.” Furthermore, despite claims to the contrary, there is no strong evidence that Aḥmad Shāh was in possession of the *kōh-i nūr* diamond at the time of his accession.

untenable on multiple counts. For one, the sources agree that Aḥmad Shāh Durrānī adopted the epithet Durr-i Durrān in an official capacity at the outset of his reign, which took place before the accession of his Mughal counterpart. Moreover, even if Aḥmad Shāh, the Durrānī, sought to distinguish himself from the Mughal Aḥmad Shāh, he could just as easily have emphasized his Abdālī identity rather than invent an entirely new name for the purpose. More importantly, Wakīlī Pōpalzaʿī's theory also fails to explain why Aḥmad Shāh saw it necessary to prohibit the use of the name Abdālī altogether and insist on using Durrānī in its place. Thus, his explanations for Aḥmad Shāh's adoption of the epithet Durr-i Durrān are unconvincing. And while he acknowledges that some contemporary religious and spiritual figures (*ba'ẓi mashāyikh wa rūḥāniyān-i 'aṣr*)—and one may presume that the aforesaid Ṣābir Shāh is among the religious figures alluded to—recommended that Aḥmad Shāh change the name of the Abdālī to “Durrānī,” Wakīlī Pōpalzaʿī, and practically all other authors writing on the subject, offer no compelling explanation of the meaning of the “Pearl of Pearls.”

The Sufi Background

One reason for the ambiguity surrounding the name “Durrānī” is that most authors have failed to examine it in the context of Aḥmad Shāh's religious inclinations. Indeed, the ruler's profound devotion to Sufism, or Islamic mysticism, is a topic that has gone largely unexplored in the scholarly literature. This oversight is glaring considering the abundance of evidence that Aḥmad Shāh's mystical worldview permeated virtually all aspects of his reign, including, I would argue, his adoption of the epithet “Pearl of Pearls.”

As highlighted earlier in this chapter, relatively little concrete data has survived about a number of aspects of Aḥmad's life prior to his becoming ruler, including such details as the juridical “school,” or *mazhab*, with which he identified. Because under Aḥmad Shāh's successors, the Durrānī state identified with Ḥanafī Sunnism in terms of Islamic

jurisprudence (*fiqh*), the assumption is that Aḥmad Shāh was an adherent of the Ḥanafī-Sunni *mazhab*.¹²³ Yet the degree to which Aḥmad Shāh's Ḥanafī-Sunni association was reflected in his religious policies at the state level has not been studied to any appreciable extent, presumably on account of the lack of relevant information in the extant primary sources.¹²⁴

What is far more readily attested to in the primary sources is Aḥmad Shāh's devotion to Islamic mysticism or Sufism. Given his survival in the contententious politics that took the lives of many of his relatives, including his father Zamān Khān, it is unsurprising that Aḥmad found solace in treading the mystical path and this likely cultivated in him a sense that he was the recipient of divine favour and destined for great things. This interpretation is supported by the *Tārīkh-i Shāh Walī Khān wazīr*, which describes Aḥmad as a “mystically-inclined man” (*mard-i mutaṣawwif*) who spent much of his time in prayer, meditation, and contemplation of the other world.¹²⁵ This interpretation is also supported by the *Siyar al-muta'akhhirīn*, which indicates that Aḥmad frequented the shrine of Imām Riḏā in Mashhad—a pilgrimage site venerated by both Shī'ī and Sunni communities throughout its history.¹²⁶ From such descriptions it may be inferred that Aḥmad received training in Sufism

¹²³ Aḥmad Shāh's affiliation with the Ḥanafī *mazhab* is briefly described in 'Abd al-Karīm 'Alawī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad*, fac. ed., 18. For more on the historical association of the Durrānī state with Ḥanafī Sunnism, see Wakīlī Pōpalza'ī, *Timūr Shāh Durrānī*, 1:41–42; McChesney, *Waqf in Central Asia*, 222, 268, 282.

¹²⁴ In his article on the role of Islam in Durrānī-ruled Afghanistan, Ashraf Ghani suggests in passing (and without any evidence) that the formation of the Durrānī empire was accompanied by the establishment of courts of Islamic law, or Shari'a, in the various urban centres under the state's authority; see Ashraf Ghani, “Islam and State-Building in a Tribal Society, Afghanistan 1880–1901,” *Modern Asian Studies* 12, no. 2 (1978): 270. I have been unable to locate references to the establishment of Shari'a courts in the urban centres of the Durrānī empire under Aḥmad Shāh and, to my knowledge, this topic has not been studied in any great depth.

¹²⁵ Ghulām Ḥusayn Khān, *Siyar al-muta'akhhirīn*, 2:16; Wakīlī Pōpalza'ī, *Aḥmad Shāh*, 18.

¹²⁶ At first glance, it may seem counterintuitive to learn that Aḥmad frequented the shrine of Imām Riḏā, which is usually associated with Shī'ī Islam. However, in his elucidating essay on the phenomenon of *ahl al-bayt*-ism, McChesney describes how reverence for the family of the Prophet Muḥammad (i.e., the *ahl al-bayt*) was not

from an early age, though the specifics remain murky. During his time in Nādirid service, he may have interacted with the prominent Sunni religious scholars that Nādir had commissioned to validate his “Jaʿfari *mazhab*” which he wanted the Ottomans to recognize as a fifth school of Sunni jurisprudence.¹²⁷ If we accept Imām al-Dīn’s account that the above-mentioned Sufi Ṣābir Shāh joined Nādir’s court three years prior to his death, then Aḥmad may have received training from him. Other clues as to Aḥmad’s education include the aforesaid statement, likely derived from the *Shajara Afghānī-i Abdālī*, that the Alakōzay religious instructor or *ākhūnd*, Mullā ʿUsmān, offered him protection in the Herat region; one may assume that the *ākhūnd* instructed him in religious matters too. The *Tārīkh-i Shāh Walī Khān wazīr* indicates that Aḥmad was in communication with Bagī Khān, the future Shāh Walī Khān, who organized a militia in Qandahar before joining him in Māzandarān. We also know that Aḥmad’s first wife apparently belonged to a prominent Arab family based in Jalālābād. This information indicates Aḥmad was in close contact with his relations in Qandahar, Kabul, and neighbouring lands while in the service of Nādir and may well have been in correspondence with the religious figures of these areas.

Indication of Aḥmad Shāh’s mystical worldview may be found in the accounts by Kashmīrī, Imām al-Dīn, Gulistāna, and others that relate his interactions with the holy man, Ṣābir Shāh, prior to his accession. While these accounts differ in some details, all agree on

unique to Shīʿism but crossed confessional boundaries between Shīʿī and Sunni communities. Given the uniqueness of *ahl al-bayt*-ism throughout the Islamic history of Iran and Central Asia, and the Islamicate world more broadly, it was common for Sunni and Shīʿī pilgrims alike to visit shrines of members of the family of the Prophet Muḥammad, including, though certainly not limited to, the shrine of Imām Rīzā in Mashhad. See McChesney, *Waqf in Central Asia*, 33–34; Robert D. McChesney, “‘Barrier of Heterodoxy’?: Rethinking the Ties Between Iran and Central Asia in the 17th Century,” in *Safavid Persia: The History and Politics of an Islamic Society - Pembroke Papers 4*, ed. Charles Melville (London: I. B. Tauris, 1996), 231–67.

¹²⁷ For more on this proposal, see Ernest Tucker, “Nadir Shah and the Jaʿfari Madhhab Reconsidered,” *Iranian Studies* 27, nos. 1–4 (1994): 163–79; Tucker, *Nadir Shah’s Quest for Legitimacy*, xii–xiii passim.

certain motifs that are rife with esoteric significance.¹²⁸ An example is the Šābir Shāh's practice of constructing talismanic tents in preparation for Aḥmad's sovereignty. Šābir Shāh is represented in various sources as something of a miracle-worker with great mystical powers, and his talismanic practices are depicted as actually effecting Aḥmad's kingship.

According to all versions, shortly after Nādir's death Šābir Shāh advises Aḥmad to become king but the latter is reluctant to do so and points out that he lacks the trappings of kingship. Here reluctance is not only a sign of modesty but also follows the prophetic example of Muḥammad who, according to Muslim tradition, did not choose to be a prophet but was appointed to this position by God. Similarly, Aḥmad's reluctance and modesty are to be regarded as special traits he shared with the Prophet Muḥammad and confirmed that he was suited to exercise temporal authority.

In response to Aḥmad's reluctance to become king, Šābir Shāh forms a mound of earth, signifying a throne, and a tuft of grass (in some cases wheat), signifying a crown. By using these simple materials to symbolize the trappings of kingship, Šābir Shāh conveys to Aḥmad the idea that the fancy thrones and crowns he identifies with sovereignty are mere façades; in the end, they are of little value, like a heap of dirt or a bunch of grass. He instead convinces Aḥmad that such things are inconsequential, for, what he possessed was divine favour, which is far more valuable than the regalia of kingship. Šābir Shāh's efforts to persuade Aḥmad of his spiritual gifts from God, which issue from the eternal esoteric realm

¹²⁸ Imām al-Dīn recounts an anecdote related to him by one of Nāṣir Khān's aides to the effect that one day he went to the Durrānī court and saw Aḥmad Shāh sitting upon his throne with a naked dusty beggar [i.e., Šābir] sleeping at his side. Every so often he would pull Aḥmad Shāh's ear towards him and say: "O Afghān, do you see I made you a king?" (*ay Afghān, dīdī tū rā pādshāh kardam*); see Imām al-Dīn, *Ḥusayn Shāhī*, fols. 15a–15b; Singh, *Aḥmad Shah Durrani*, 28. As this anecdote was derived from one of Nāṣir Khān's supporters and appears to be aimed at disparaging Aḥmad Shāh, who forced Nāṣir Khān out of Kabul and later defeated him in battle, it should be approached with skepticism. Nevertheless, it does rightly attest to the considerable influence that Šābir Shāh wielded over Aḥmad Shāh. An alternate, less disparaging version of this account is given in Sulṭān Muḥammad, *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī*, 123.

(*bāṭin*), over crowns and thrones, which are accidents of the ephemeral exoteric realm (*ẓāhir*), is in close conformity with popular Sufi views that the ascetic Sufis were the true “spiritual kings” who possessed authority through their connection to the Unseen realm.

Another recurring theme in these accounts is that, upon convincing Aḥmad to accede to the throne, Ṣābir Shāh instructs him to adopt the title Durr-i Durrān. The assertion that Ṣābir Shāh advised Aḥmad to adopt this epithet appears to conflict with assertions in sources like the *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī* and *Tārīkh-i Shāh Walī Khān wazīr* that God Himself decreed the name change. However, as Ṣābir Shāh functioned as the ruler’s spiritual advisor and allegedly received knowledge of hidden realities from the realm of the Unseen, it is reasonable to infer that he functioned as a saintly intermediary who conveyed to Aḥmad Shāh God’s decree to adopt the title Durr-i Durrān.

Aḥmad Shāh and the Mujaddidiyya-Naqshbandiyya

Beyond his connection to the *darwīsh* Ṣābir Shāh, Aḥmad was also closely affiliated with the foremost representatives of the Sufi networks that were prominent in the realms he asserted rule over.¹²⁹ This is especially true of the Mujaddidiyya sub-order of the Naqshbandiyya—named after the Indo-Muslim saint, Aḥmad Sirhindī (d. 1033/1624), who is

¹²⁹ While relatively little is known of Ṣābir Shāh’s background, there is indication in the *Siyar al-muta’akhhirīn* that he may have been affiliated with the Nūrāniyya sub-order of the Qādiriyya Sufi Order; see Ghulām Ḥusayn Khān, *Siyar al-muta’akhhirīn*, 2:16. There is also evidence that Aḥmad Shāh granted favours to leading members of the Qādiriyya. As an example, consider the *farmān*, issued in ca. 1169/1755, confirming the rights of the Qādirī *pīr*, Shaykh Muḥammad Taqī Qādirī, and his disciple, Ḥāfiẓ Aḥmad Yār, to the land and water in the village of Bagrām, Peshawar, as well as the income derived from the land’s produce; see S. M. Jaffar, “A Farman of Ahmad Shah Durrani,” *Proceedings of the Indian Historical Records Commission* 19 (1943): 114–19. This *farmān*, indicates that the plentiful data on Aḥmad Shāh’s affiliation with the Mujaddidiyya-Naqshbandiyya in no way precludes his association and patronage of leading members of the Nūrāniyya-Qādiriyya, or other prominent Sufi orders, for that matter, also active in the territories under Durrānī authority.

known by the title *Mujaddid-i alf-i thānī* or “Renewer of the Second [Islamic] Millennium”—which was at the time among the prominent Sufi orders in Central and South Asia.¹³⁰

An important source on Aḥmad Shāh’s affiliation with the Mujaddidiyya are the writings of ‘Alī Akbar Ōrakzay, a contemporary Afghan poet native to the Peshawar region, who personally knew Aḥmad Shāh and many of his closest associates.¹³¹ According to ‘Alī Akbar, Aḥmad Shāh and several members of his entourage, including Shāh Walī Khān and other Durrānī commanders, visited the Mujaddidī-Naqshbandī *pīr* or spiritual master Miyān Muḥammad ‘Umar b. Ibrāhīm (d. ca. 1190/1776) at Chamkanī, a village near Peshawar, and became the latter’s *murīds*, or disciples, said to have numbered roughly 17,500 individuals.¹³²

¹³⁰ An analysis of the Mujaddidī-Naqshbandī Order founded by Shaykh Aḥmad Sirhindī is given in Sajida S. Alvi, “The Naqshbandī Mujaddidi Sufi Order’s Ascendancy in Central Asia through the Eyes of Its Masters and Disciples (1010s–1200s/1600s–1800s),” *Journal of the Research Society of Pakistan* 42, no. 2 (2005): 1–21. On the westward spread of Mujaddidī-Naqshbandī influence, see Hamid Algar, “Tarīqat and Tarīq: Central Asian Naqshbandīs on the Roads to the Haramayn,” in *Central Asian Pilgrims: Hajj Routes and Pious Visits between Central Asia and the Hijaz*, ed. Alexandre Papas, Thomas Welsford, and Thierry Zarcone (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz, 2012), 59–73. On the influence of the Mujaddidī-Naqshbandī Order on the Durrānī state in particular, see Green, *Tribe, Diaspora, and Sainthood*, 197–200. Green refers to the influence of the Mujaddidī-Naqshbandīs on the court of the Bārakzay rulers of Kabul. The influence of the Naqshbandīs on the Durrānī may be traced further back to the reign of Aḥmad Shāh when several of the domains under Durrānī authority, including the capital Aḥmadshāhī (i.e., Qandahar), served as important loci of Mujaddidī-Naqshbandī activity.

¹³¹ Further details on ‘Alī Akbar Ōrakzay may be found in the publications of the late Vladimir V. Kushev, who consulted manuscripts of the latter’s poetry and prose writings held at the Mesrop Mashtots Institute of Ancient Manuscripts in Yerevan, Armenia; see V. V. Kushev, “O stranstviyah afganskogo poeta Ali-Akbara Orakzaya vo vladeniyah imperii Durrani,” *Strany i narody Vostoka* 26, no. 3 (1989): 212–13; V. V. Kushev, “K biografii Ali-Akbara Orakzay—afganskogo poeta XVIII veka,” *Vestnik Matenadarana* 12 (1977): 114–33.

¹³² For Miyān Muḥammad ‘Umar b. Ibrāhīm Chamkanī, who was also known by the *nisba* “Pishāwari,” as the *pīr* of Aḥmad Shāh and several of his courtiers, see Muḥammad Ḥanīf, “Ḥayāt wa āṣār-i Ḥaẓrat Miyān Muḥammad ‘Umar Chamkanī” (PhD diss., Peshawar University, 1979), 523–33; ‘Abd al-Shakūr Rashād, *Da Chamkanō Miyā ‘Umar* (Kabul: Da Afghānistān da ‘Ulūmō Akādīmī, da Ijtimā‘ī ‘Ulūmō ‘Ilmī aw Taḥqīqī Markaz, 1360 H.sh./1981), 23–27; Kushev, “O stranstviyah afganskogo poeta Ali-Akbara Orakzaya,” 216–18.

This visit took place when Aḥmad Shāh and his men were marching from Qandahar to the Punjab via Peshawar late in 1747.¹³³

On the expedition to Peshawar, Aḥmad Shāh was accompanied by Ṣābir Shāh, who may have been an acquaintance of Mīyān Muḥammad ‘Umar’s.¹³⁴ Ṣābir Shāh was, after all, a native of Lahore while Mīyān Muḥammad ‘Umar spent time in the city, which was the home of his own spiritual ancestor, Shaykh Sa‘dī Lāhōrī, prior to Aḥmad Shāh’s accession.¹³⁵ Further research may well reveal a relationship between Ṣābir Shāh and Naqshbandī *pīrs* such as Mīyān Muḥammad ‘Umar. Whatever the case, in their capacity as spiritual advisors to Aḥmad Shāh, the two holy men played similar roles in helping extend his influence and authority over what became the heartland of the Durrānī polity. In the case of Ṣābir Shāh,

¹³³ Wakīlī Pōpalza’ī mentions Muḥammad ‘Umar “Pishāwari” (i.e., Muḥammad ‘Umar Chamkānī) as one of several Mujaddidī shaykhs that Aḥmad Shāh visited on his travels to India. Several biographical dictionaries dedicated to Mujaddidī-Naqshbandī saints describe Aḥmad Shāh’s interactions with other *pīrs* belonging to the order. For instance, in his *‘Umdat al-maqāmāt*, Muḥammad Faḥl Allāh Mujaddidī notes that, on his way to Lahore, Aḥmad Shāh sent Shāh Wali Khān and Khān Jahān Khān to pay their respects to the Mujaddidī *pīr*, Shāh Ghulām Muḥammad Ma‘ṣūm (d. 1161/1748). The latter passed his regards on to Aḥmad Shāh and predicted that the latter’s victory in India would take place in the following year, by which time he, the *pīr*, would have passed away. See Wakīlī Pōpalza’ī, *Timūr Shāh Durrānī*, 2:678–79; Wakīlī Pōpalza’ī, *Aḥmad Shāh*, 83n2; Muḥammad Faḥl Allāh Mujaddidī, *‘Umdat al-maqāmāt*, ed. Muḥammad Hāshim Mujaddidī (Lahore: Bāzār-i Kashmīrī, 1355/1936), 414–15. In the *Ḥadīqat al-awliyā’*, Ghulām Sarwar Lāhōrī notes that Aḥmad Shāh also met another Mujaddidī *pīr* with connections to the Durrānī court, Shaykh Muḥammad Sa‘dī Lāhōrī, on whose advice he refrained from attacking Lahore; see Ghulām Sarwar Lāhōrī, *Ḥadīqat al-awliyā’*, ed. Muḥammad Iqbāl Mujaddidī, 3rd ed. (Lahore: Taṣawwuf Foundation, 1419/1999), 202–3.

¹³⁴ Singh notes that, according to the *Ansāb-i ru’asā-yi Dēra Ismā‘īl Khān* by Shēr Muḥammad Khān, an Urdu work which I have been unable to locate, the title Durr-i Durrān was given to Aḥmad Shāh by Mīyān Muḥammad ‘Umar; see Singh, *Aḥmad Shah Durrani*, 27–28n; Singh’s note was reproduced by K. B. Nasim in ‘Abd al-Karīm Kashmīrī, *Bayān-i wāqī’*, 188n. A similar tradition is recounted in Elphinstone, *An Account of the Kingdom of Caubul*, 396; see also Adamec, *Historical and Political Gazetteer of Afghanistan*, 5:11, 5:142; and Ghubār, *Aḥmad Shāh Bābā-yi Afghān*, 56–57n1. The veracity of this claim is uncertain, especially since it conflicts with many sources suggesting that Ṣābir Shāh instructed Aḥmad Shāh to adopt the title Durr-i Durrān. The conflicting data may be reconciled if Ṣābir Shāh was in some way associated with Muḥammad ‘Umar and the latter advised him to command Aḥmad Shāh to adopt the title Durr-i Durrān, though this assumption requires verification.

¹³⁵ Mīyān Muḥammad ‘Umar’s presence in Lahore on the eve of Aḥmad Shāh’s coronation is mentioned in Marghuzī, *Aḥmadshāhī shah-nāma*, 43–53.

soon after reaching Qandahar with Aḥmad Shāh in 1160/1747, he helped negotiate the surrender of the Pōpalzay khans Muḥabbat, Mānū, and Gadū as well as the Ghilzay governor of Qalāt, Ashraf Tōkhī.¹³⁶ Thereafter, while camped at Peshawar, Aḥmad Shāh dispatched Ṣābir Shāh to Lahore to convince its governor, Mīr Ḥayāt Allāh Khān b. Zakariyyā Khān, also known as Shāh Nawāz Khān, to surrender. Purportedly on account of Ṣābir Shāh's abrasive attitude towards him and his officials, Shāh Nawāz Khān had the *darwīsh* executed, thus prompting the Durrānī invasion of Lahore in 1161/1748.¹³⁷

Miyān Muḥammad ʿUmar played a similar role in helping secure Durrānī authority in the Peshawar region. Shortly after Ṣābir Shāh's execution, he dispatched a group of his disciples based in Peshawar to help a Durrānī army subdue Khān Bahādur, the son of the former governor of Kabul and Peshawar, Nāṣir Khān. In 1182/1769, Miyān Muḥammad ʿUmar again led a band of his disciples in support of Aḥmad Shāh's "uncle," Buland Khān, who was being besieged by Sikh fighters at the fortress of Rōhtās.¹³⁸ Not only did Aḥmad

¹³⁶ Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, ed. Murādōf, 1:35b–38a. During the Nadirid conquest of Qandahar, Ashraf Khān Tōkhī defected to the side of the invading army. After Nādir Shāh's conquest of Qandahar in 1150/1738, Ashraf Tōkhī was appointed governor of Qalāt; see Maḥdī Khān, *Jahāngushā-yi Nādirī*, 302; Sulṭān Muḥammad, *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī*, 91–96. Further details on Ashraf Khān Tōkhī are given in Ḥayāt Khān, *Ḥayāt-i Afghānī*, 263–65; Bēnawā, *Hōtakī-hā*, 6n2.

¹³⁷ ʿAbd al-Karīm Kashmīrī, *Bayān-i wāqīʿ*, 188–89; Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, ed. Murādōf, 1:45b–50b; Muḥammad Mustajāb, *Gulistān-i Raḥmat*, fol. 100a; ʿAlī al-Dīn Lāhōrī, *ʿIbrat-nāma*, 202–3; Singh, *Aḥmad Shah Durrani*, 39–53.

¹³⁸ Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, ed. Murādōf, 1:62b–63a, 2:604b–605a. Buland Khān, also known as Sarbuland Khān, is described in some sources as the paternal uncle (ʿamū) of Aḥmad Shāh. As A. M. K. Durrani notes, Sarbuland Khān, whose original name had been “Jiwan” (Jawān?) Khān, was a member of the Bahādur Khēl lineage of the Sadōzay clan. Rather than being an actual uncle of Aḥmad Shāh, he seems to have been an honorary one on account of his close genealogical connection to the ruler on his father's side. Following the Durrānī victory at Panipat, Sarbuland Khān served as governor of Jalandhar, Kashmir, and Dēra Ismāʿīl Khān before Aḥmad Shāh appointed him commander of the fort at Rōhtās as deputy of the Durrānī prince, Sikandar. Sarbuland Khān's appointment to Rōhtās occurred prior to the Sikh attack chronicled in the *TASH*, which resulted in his capture. See Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, ed. Murādōf, 2:541a, 2:603a–5a; ʿAlī al-Dīn Lāhōrī, *ʿIbrat-nāma*, 239; Durrani, *Multan under the Afghans*, 56–57n38.

Shāh receive support from Miyān Muḥammad ‘Umar himself, but after the latter’s death his descendants maintained close ties to the Durrānī court.¹³⁹

Aḥmad Shāh established close ties with various other Mujaddidī-Naqshbandī figures, perhaps the most prominent being the aforesaid Mullā Idrīs Khān, a Mujaddidī *pīr* who had long served as Military Judge (*qāẓī-i ‘askar*) at the court of Aḥmad Shāh.¹⁴⁰ Mullā Idrīs was among the clerics who vetted Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, author of the *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, prior to his being admitted into Durrānī service.¹⁴¹ The considerable influence Mullā Idrīs wielded at the Durrānī court is further indicated by Aḥmad Shāh’s decision to appoint him grand *wazīr* just prior to his death in 1179/1766.

It is also worth mentioning that Aḥmad Shāh regularly interacted with another important Mujaddidī-Naqshbandī *pīr*, Miyān Faqīr Allāh (d. 1195/1781). He was a native of Jalālābād who spent time studying in the holy cities of the Hijaz before settling in the district of Shikārpūr in Sind, where his tomb is located.¹⁴² From his collection of letters

¹³⁹ On Muḥammad ‘Umar’s activities in support of Aḥmad Shāh, see Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, ed. Murādōf, 1:62b–63a, 2:604b–5a. James Darmesteter refers to a Pashto poem that describes Aḥmad Shāh visiting ‘Umar Chamkanī and receiving the latter’s blessing on the eve of the Battle of Panipat in 1761 against the Marathas. However, the details given in the poem, which appears to have been composed decades after Aḥmad Shāh’s reign, require verification. See James Darmesteter, *Chants populaires des afghans* (Paris, 1888–90; reprint, Amsterdam: Philo Press, 1971), 1–5.

¹⁴⁰ Citing the *TASh* (though without any page reference), Ghani describes Mullā Idrīs Khān as a non-Pashtun “from the town of Daulatabad, in the northern region” though I have not been able to locate evidence in support of this statement from Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī’s chronicle; see Ghani, “Production and Domination,” 365. The references to Mullā Idrīs Khān in the primary sources point to the fact that he belonged to an Afghan-Pashtun family. On the Afghan-Pashtun identity and the family background of Mullā Idrīs Khān and his brother Mullā Fayz Allāh Khān Dawlatshāhī, see ‘Abd al-Karīm “Bukhārī,” *Histoire de l’Asie Centrale*, 1:13; Maḥmūd al-Mūsawī, *Aḥwāl-i aqwām-i chahārgāna-i Afghān*, fol. 39a. For a reference to Mullā Fayz Allāh’s Kākar (i.e., Pashtun) background, see Faqīr Allāh, *Guzīda’i az maktūbāt-i Miyā Faqīr Allāh Jalālābādī*, xi.

¹⁴¹ Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, ed. Murādōf, 1:9a–9b.

¹⁴² As noted earlier (see note 38), Aḥmad Shāh’s first wife was a native of Jalālābād and most scholars believe her family belonged to a local Sunni Arab family of influence. It is unclear whether or not this family was associated with Faqīr Allāh, though further research may bear out such an association.

(*maktūbāt*) we know that, while residing in Shikārpūr, Miyān Faqīr Allāh gave advice on various matters to Aḥmad Shāh and leading members of his court in Qandahar, including his Military Judge, Mullā Idrīs Khān; his grand *wazīr*, Shāh Walī Khān; and the Durrānī prince Sulaymān.¹⁴³ Aḥmad Shāh's close relations with influential Mujaddidī-Naqshbandī *pīrs* like Miyān Muḥammad ʿUmar, Miyān Faqīr Allāh,¹⁴⁴ and many others demonstrates his close association with the Mujaddidiyya during his reign, and perhaps even earlier.¹⁴⁵

The Precious Pearl

In addition to his ties to Šābir Shāh and some of the foremost Mujaddidī-Naqshbandī spiritual masters of his time, Aḥmad Shāh's interest in Sufism and the occult sciences is also demonstrated by the mystical writings that he composed—a significant albeit under-appreciated source on his reign. These writings include his *dīwān*, or anthology of mystical poetry, written predominantly in Pashto but also in Persian, as well as a treatise in Persian entitled *Rukn al-yaqīn* (The pillar of divine Certitude).¹⁴⁶

¹⁴³ Faqīr Allāh, *Guzīdaʾī az maktūbāt-i Miyā Faqīr Allāh Jalālābādī*, i–xl; Rawan Farhadi, “Mian Faqirullah of Jalal-Abad (d. 1781): Profile of a Sufi,” *Afghanistan* 33, no. 3 (1359 H.sh./1980): 77–87.

¹⁴⁴ Faqīr Allāh's spiritual lineage is as follows: Shaykh Muḥammad Masʿūd Pishāwarī → Shaykh Muḥammad Saʿīd Lāhōrī → Shaykh Saʿd Allāh → Shaykh Ādam Banūrī → Shaykh Aḥmad Sirhindī. See Faqīr Allāh, *Guzīdaʾī az maktūbāt-i Miyā Faqīr Allāh Jalālābādī*, xi, xxi. Muḥammad ʿUmar's spiritual lineage is: Shaykh Muḥammad Yaḥyā → Shaykh Saʿdī Lāhōrī → Shaykh Ādam Banūrī → Shaykh Aḥmad Sirhindī; see Ḥanīf, “Ḥayāt wa āsār-i Ḥazrat Miyān Muḥammad ʿUmar Chamkanī,” 398–400; Rashād, *Da Chamkanō Miyā ʿUmar*, 16–18.

¹⁴⁵ Aḥmad Shāh may also have been in communication with Shāh Walī Allāh Dihlawī (d. 1176/1762), another influential eighteenth-century Mujaddidī-Naqshbandī intellectual. Specifically, based on Shāh Walī Allāh's writings, several scholars have inferred that he invited Aḥmad Shāh to invade India on the eve of the Battle of Panipat in 1174/1761. On Shāh Walī Allāh's supposed communications with Aḥmad Shāh, see especially K. A. Nizami, “Shah Wali-Ullah Dehlavi and Indian Politics in the Eighteenth Century,” *Islamic Culture* 25, no. 1 (1951): 143–45. As Gommans and others have pointed out, not all the letters attributed to Shāh Walī Allāh may be authentic, which gives reason to doubt whether he did, in fact, personally write Aḥmad Shāh an invitation to invade India. See Gommans, *The Rise of the Indo-Afghan Empire*, 56n40, 169n28.

¹⁴⁶ Many editions of Aḥmad Shāh's *dīwān* have been published; for a more recent edition, see Muḥammad Maʿsūm Hōtak, ed., *Da lōy Aḥmad Shāh Bābā dīwān* (Quetta: Ṣaḥāf, 1388 H.sh./2009). For a selection of poems

Since my contention is that the epithet “Pearl of Pearls” has esoteric significance, a digression into the metaphysical importance of the pearl in Islamic mystical thought may prove instructive. While the symbolism of the pearl is of metaphysical significance in many religious traditions,¹⁴⁷ in the Islamic context, it finds elaborate expression in the works of various Neoplatonizing Islamic philosophers who used it to represent the first creation. The writings of Shihāb al-Dīn Yaḥyā Suhrawardī (549–87/1154–91), founder of the school of Illuminationist philosophy (*Ḥikmat al-ishrāq*), are a pertinent example. In his treatise (*risāla*) entitled On the Reality of Love (*Fī ḥaqīqat al-‘ishq*), Suhrawardī writes that the first creation of God was a pearl (*gawhar*) of a lustrous (*tābnāk*) quality that was named “Intellect” (*‘aql*).¹⁴⁸ In another of his well-known treatises, The Red Intellect (*‘Aql-i surkh*), we read of the *gawhar-i shab-afrūz*, or “the night-illuminating pearl,” which, in Suhrawardī’s cosmology, represents the Sphere of the Moon, i.e., the Tenth Intellect. According to Suhrawardī’s treatise, the

from the *dīwān* translated into English, see Raverty, *Selections from the Poetry of the Afghāns*, 294–304. It may be also noted that there exists at least one other Persian treatise attributed to Aḥmad Shāh entitled *‘Ilm-i ganj* (The knowledge of the treasure), which may well be directly related to the royal epithet “Pearl of Pearls.” For references in passing to this treatise, which I have been unable to procure a copy of, see Faqīr Allāh, *Guzīda’i az maktūbāt-i Miyā Faqīr Allāh Jalālābādī*, xiii; and Hōtak, *Da lōy Aḥmad Shāh Bābā dīwān*, 13. Rawan Farhadi has pointed out that there is some doubt whether Aḥmad Shāh, who spent much of his career preoccupied in political affairs, composed the poetry in his *dīwān* himself or whether an unidentified Pashto poet penned the *dīwān* and attributed it to the ruler; see Rawan Farhadi, “Literature in Pashto,” in *History of Civilizations of Central Asia*, vol. 5, *Development in Contrast: From the Sixteenth to the Mid-Nineteenth Century*, ed. Chahryar Adle, Irfan Habib, and Karl M. Baipakov (Paris: UNESCO, 1996), 718. Whatever the case, it is apparent that Aḥmad Shāh was fond of mystical poetry and a student of the religious sciences. To this end, he is even said to have held weekly meetings with the religious classes that were known as the *majlis-i ‘ulamā’*; see Elphinstone, *An Account of the Kingdom of Caubul*, 199; Ferrier, *History of the Afghans*, 93.

¹⁴⁷ The equivalent of the precious pearl in the Christian tradition would be “The Pearl of Great Price.” For the biblical parable of the pearl, see Matthew 13:45–46.

¹⁴⁸ See Shihāb al-Dīn Yaḥyā Suhrawardī, *Shihabuddin Yahya Suhrawardi: The Philosophical Allegories and Mystical Treatises*, ed. and trans. Wheeler M. Thackston Jr. (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda, 1999), 58.

night-illuminating pearl is located on the legendary Mount Qaf (*Kōh-i Qāf*) and its brilliance is one of the marvels that the adept encounters while on the path to Reality (*ḥaqīqat*).¹⁴⁹

The pearl retains its primordial significance in the writings of the renowned Andalusian mystic, Muḥyi al-Dīn Ibn al-‘Arabī (d. 638/1240). Of particular interest for our purposes are Ibn al-‘Arabī’s views on cosmogony, especially his representation of ultimate Reality (*ḥaqīqa*)—or what Neoplatonizing Islamic philosophers referred to as the First Intellect (*al-‘aql al-awwal*)—as a white pearl (*al-durra al-bayẓā*).¹⁵⁰ This idea of the pearl as representing Reality or *ḥaqīqa*, and sometimes also gnosis (*ma‘rifa*), is expressed as well in the writings of later Sufi authors, including the influential Naqshbandī intellectual, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Jāmī, who was an admirer of Ibn al-‘Arabī and an ardent student of his theosophy. In his *al-Durra al-fākhira* (completed 886/1481), Jāmī describes the positions of the Sufis, speculative theologians (*al-mutakallimīn*), and philosophers (*al-ḥukamā*) with regard to eleven theological issues and he seeks to demonstrate how the views of theoretical Sufism are superior to those of the theologians and philosophers.¹⁵¹ It is no coincidence that Jāmī entitled this work *al-Durra al-fākhira*, or “The Precious Pearl.”

Beyond Aḥmad Shāh’s association with prominent Sufi figures active in his lifetime, his own mystical writings demonstrate a relatively sophisticated understanding of the finer points of Sufi thought. This is the impression given by the aforesaid *Rukn al-yaqīn*—a little known mystical treatise, which also contains elements of lettrism, that is worthy of a more

¹⁴⁹ Suhrawardī, *The Philosophical Allegories*, 22–25, 47–48.

¹⁵⁰ Bassām ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Jābī, ed., *Iṣṭilāḥāt al-shaykh Muḥyi al-Dīn Ibn ‘Arabī* (Beirut: Dār al-Imām Muslim, 1990), 68.

¹⁵¹ Nūr al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Jāmī, *The Precious Pearl: Al-Jāmī’s al-Durrah al-Fākhira, with the Commentary of ‘Abd al-Ghafūr al-Lārī*, trans. Nicholas L. Heer (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1979), 5–7.

thorough analysis but that, for the purposes of this thesis, will be discussed only briefly.¹⁵² The work recounts the spiritual journey of a wayfarer called Pādshāh (King), who, in his quest for gnosis, encounters various figures, the most prominent among them being Jān-i Jahān (Soul of the World) and Rayḥān (Sweet Basil). In the course of his journey, Pādshāh queries Jān-i Jahān and Rayḥān about topics ranging from the nature of God and His creation to matters concerning faith (*īmān*) and knowledge (*ilm*). The allegorical journey of Pādshāh may well represent Aḥmad Shāh's own quest for gnosis, since the commentary on the work by his Khān-i 'ulūm (lit. "Master of the Sciences"), Muḥammad Ghawṣ b. Turkmān (fl. mid-eighteenth century), entitled *Sharḥ-i Rukn al-yaqīn*, suggests that Aḥmad Shāh traversed to the realm of the Unseen (*ghayb*), received divine inspiration, and endeavored to express his experience in writing, "so that the People of the Heart [i.e., the Sufis] may find benefit from its inner meanings (*tā ahl-i dil bi-ma'ānī-i ān intifā' yāband*)."¹⁵³ In his prefatory remarks, Muḥammad Ghawṣ adds that Aḥmad Shāh attained the rank of *ḥaqq al-yaqīn*, or divine Certitude, which in Sufi epistemology is "the highest of the levels of Witnessing" (*muntahā-i ṭabaqāt-i shuhūd*) and "the foremost of the ranks of Certitude" (*ghāya-i darajāt-i yaqīn*), and he explains that his treatise was for this reason entitled *Rukn al-yaqīn*.¹⁵⁴

Given his lifelong devotion to Sufism, Aḥmad Shāh would doubtless have been aware of the symbolism of the pearl in the writings of Sufi thinkers, including the *al-Durra al-fākhira* of Jāmī, a prominent Naqshbandī mystic author. It is tempting to view his epithet Durr-i

¹⁵² While such occultist elements may be detected throughout the *Rukn al-yaqīn*, prominent among them are the lettrist formulas found at the beginning of the treatise. See Muḥammad Ghawṣ, *Sharḥ-i Rukn al-yaqīn*, fols. 15b, 23a, 28b, 31b, 32a, 35a.

¹⁵³ Muḥammad Ghawṣ, *Sharḥ-i Rukn al-yaqīn*, fols. 5a–6b, 90b–91a.

¹⁵⁴ Muḥammad Ghawṣ, *Sharḥ-i Rukn al-yaqīn*, fols. 5b–6a.

Durrān as deriving from this treatise.¹⁵⁵ Indeed, it will be recalled that Aḥmad Shāh is supposed to have been raised by the religious figure Mullā ‘Usmān in the region of Herat, which had been an important centre of Naqshbandī activity since the reign of the Timurid ruler, Sulṭān Ḥusayn Bāyqarā, who patronized influential Naqshbandī Sufis such as Jāmī. At our present state of knowledge, it would be difficult to assess in any detail the nature of Aḥmad Shāh’s training, including discerning which works may have inspired his religio-political ideals. But whether or not his royal epithet Durr-i Durrān was based on Jāmī’s *al-Durra al-fākhira*, Aḥmad Shāh’s statements in the *Rukn al-yaqīn* affirm that he regarded himself, and was regarded by his supporters, as having acquired knowledge of Reality and was, in the parlance of the Sufis, in possession of the “pearl of gnosis.” Aḥmad Shāh’s adoption of the epithet Pearl of Pearls would thus signify that, as a divinely appointed monarch who had attained gnosis, he was its very embodiment.

But in addition to elucidating the esoteric significance of his regnal title, the view that Aḥmad Shāh embodied the “Pearl of Pearls” helps explain the great spiritual gifts that were attributed to him. In other words, the pearl appears to have performed the function of the philosopher’s stone, which generations of philosophers and alchemists, since ancient times, believed had the power to reveal occult or hidden realities. Hints that for Aḥmad Shāh the Pearl of Pearls was akin to the philosopher’s stone may be found in many Durrānī-era sources like the *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, which is replete with hagiographical descriptions

¹⁵⁵ Indeed, as discussed in §1.1.2, the chief *munshī* of the Nādirid era, Mahdī Khān Astarābādī, composed a prosimetrical account of Nādir Shāh’s reign entitled *Durra-i Nādira*, which appears to be a play on Jāmī’s *al-Durra al-fākhira*. This would indicate that the writings of Jāmī circulated among Iranian intellectuals active in the eighteenth century, including Mahdī Khān and the latter’s protégé Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, who entered Durrānī service and articulated an elaborate religio-political theory of kingship for Aḥmad Shāh in the *TASH*.

of his supernatural abilities, including the ability to communicate in the language of heaven, interact with the Unseen realm, perceive hidden secrets, and foresee future events.¹⁵⁶

Several passages from the *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī* provide insights into Aḥmad Shāh's supernatural abilities. For example, during Aḥmad Shāh's siege of Mashhad in 1163/1750, he is said to have "fixed his Reality-perceiving gaze on the spiritual world" (*chashm-i ḥaqīqat-bīn bi-sayr-i ʿālam-i maʿnī gushūdand*), and, after an ensuing mystical vision, he summoned the Durrānī commanders in his retinue and explained that he had engaged in a dialogue with the eighth Imam of Twelver Shiʿism, ʿAlī Riẓā (d. ca. 818), known as Imām Riẓā. The Imām informed him that God had not decreed victory for him that year and advised him to return three years later.¹⁵⁷ In accordance with his mystical encounter with Imām Riẓā, Aḥmad Shāh and his Durrānī forces returned three years later and successfully invaded Mashhad.

Aḥmad Shāh's alleged ability to perceive and interpret hidden realities is supposed to have enabled him to foresee many crucial political developments, including revolts in his realm. Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī suggests that one of the miraculous feats (*khawāriq wa karāmāt*) he manifested was to anticipate the rebellion of his nephew, Luqmān Khān. He informed his close confidant Shāh Walī Khān of the rebellion in advance, yet refrained from acting on it prior to the appointed time lest his subjects regard Luqmān Khān as an innocent victim.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁶ On the ability to foresee future events as a product of attaining wisdom, see Hossein Ziai, "The Source and Nature of Authority: A Study of al-Suhrawardī's Illuminationist Political Doctrine," in *The Political Aspects of Islamic Philosophy: Essays in Honor of Muhsin S. Mahdi*, ed. Charles E. Butterworth (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), 325–26.

¹⁵⁷ Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, ed. Murādōf, 1:140a–42a.

¹⁵⁸ Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, ed. Murādōf, 1:101a–2b, 1:116b, 1:170a–72a. Aḥmad Shāh's supernatural abilities are in conformity with the "Suhrawardian ruler endowed with cosmic knowledge"; see A. C. S. Peacock, "Metaphysics and Rulership in Late Fourteenth-Century Central Anatolia: Qadi Burhān al-Dīn of Sivas and His *Iksīr al-Saʿādāt*," in *Islamic Literature and Intellectual Life in Fourteenth- and Fifteenth-Century Anatolia*, ed. A. C. S. Peacock and Sara Nur Yıldız (Würzburg: Ergon, 2016), 129–30.

The *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī* also often attributes the military triumphs of Aḥmad Shāh and his Durrānī supporters over their adversaries—both Muslim and non-Muslim—to divine favour.

The depiction of Aḥmad Shāh as a spiritually gifted monarch who possessed “the pearl of gnosis” would appear to indicate that his views on kingship were influenced by Illuminationist philosophy. Early Durrānī sources use nearly identical terminology to that found in Suhrawardī’s writings when describing Aḥmad Shāh, who is said in the *Shāhnāma-i Aḥmadī* to have possessed the “night-illuminating light” (*chirāgh-i shab-afrūz*) or whose speech is likened in the *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī* to the “night-illuminating pearl” (*qawhar-i shab-chirāgh*).¹⁵⁹ Similarly evocative of the influence of Illuminationist terminology is Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī’s description of Aḥmad Shāh’s luminous presence, as in the following verse where he describes Luqmān Khān appearing before his royal uncle:

When [Luqmān Khān] appeared before the light-radiating sun
The dawn of good fortune illumined the night of his fate

chūn bi pīsh-i mihr-i nūr-afshān rasīd
*ṣubḥ-i iqbal az shab-i bakht-ash damīd*¹⁶⁰

Also relevant for the purposes of the present investigation is the influence of the political doctrine of Suhrawardī’s Illuminationist philosophy on the representation of Aḥmad Shāh’s kingship in Durrānī sources.¹⁶¹ According to this doctrine, rulers receive authority to exercise political dominion (*ḥukūma*) through divine inspiration, which they establish through a direct connection or link to “the realm of the Unseen” (*‘ālam al-ghayb*).

¹⁵⁹ Suhrawardī, *The Philosophical Allegories*, 22–25; Siyālkōtī, *Shāhnāma-i Aḥmadī*, fol. 132a; Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, ed. Murādōf, 1:5b.

¹⁶⁰ Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, ed. Murādōf, 1:101a–2b.

¹⁶¹ For an excellent discussion of the political elements of Suhrawardī’s Illuminationist philosophy, see Ziai, “The Source and Nature of Authority,” 304–44.

Only a select category of individuals who obtain wisdom and knowledge of the divine—as in the case of Aḥmad Shāh, who, as noted above, is said to have reached the lofty spiritual rank of *ḥaqq al-yaqīn*—are fit to exercise authority and become the “perfect rulers of the age.”¹⁶² Moreover, rulers who attain said wisdom are able to demonstrate various superhuman powers, which are signs of divine inspiration, that reinforce their prerogative to rule.¹⁶³

The impact of Suhrawardī’s political doctrine on Aḥmad Shāh appears to derive, at least in part, from the writings of the Illuminationist philosopher, Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad Dawānī (d. 908/1502–3), who was active in the “imperial” era of Āq Quyūnlū rule (ca. 1467–1508).¹⁶⁴ Dawānī’s views on political legitimacy are outlined in his famous work on ethics, the *Akhlāq-i Jalālī* (completed ca. 880/1475).¹⁶⁵ Especially noteworthy is his depiction of the legitimate sovereign as the “shadow of God” (*ẓill Allāh*) or “vicegerent of God” (*khalīfat Allāh*) who receives the mandate to rule through divine support (*ta’yīd-i ilāhī*) and whose rule is sustained through the preservation of Shari‘a, or Islamic law, and the dispensing of justice.¹⁶⁶ That Durrānī sources habitually accord Aḥmad Shāh these attributes would seem to suggest that Dawānī’s ideas on legitimacy represent an important link between Aḥmad Shāh and Suhrawardī’s political doctrines. This view is entirely plausible considering the

¹⁶² Within this select category of individuals are the prophets, divine kings, or philosopher sages; see Ziai, “The Source and Nature of Authority,” 311–12.

¹⁶³ Ziai, “The Source and Nature of Authority,” 306–13, 332–35.

¹⁶⁴ See John E. Woods study of the Āq Quyūnlūs for a periodization of their time in power, in both the non-imperial and imperial phases; John E. Woods, *The Aqquyunlu: Clan, Confederation, Empire*, rev. ed. (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1999), 10 passim.

¹⁶⁵ For more on the *Akhlāq-i Jalālī*, also known by its principle title *Lawāmi‘ al-ishrāq fī makārim al-akhlāq*, see Jalāl al-Dīn Dawānī, *Akhlāq-i Jalālī*, ed. ‘Abd Allāh Mas‘ūdī Ārānī (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Ittīlā‘āt, 1391 H.sh./2012–13), 18–21; Woods, *The Aqquyunlu*, 89, 103–5, 140, 145, 233–34.

¹⁶⁶ For the relevant section of the *Akhlāq-i Jalālī*, see Dawānī, *Akhlāq-i Jalālī*, 221–23; and Woods, *The Aqquyunlu*, 105. The significance attributed to the tripartite legitimating principles of divine election, divine law, and justice, particularly as represented in early Durrānī sources outlining Aḥmad Shāh’s claims to kingship, is elaborated on in the ensuing section.

prevalence of Dawānī's Illuminationist works, especially the *Akhlāq-i Jalālī*, in Iran and India when Aḥmad Shāh was active in both lands.¹⁶⁷ It is worth adding that Dawānī wrote works on lettrism—the occult science towards which Aḥmad Shāh gravitated.¹⁶⁸

My argument, in summary, is that Aḥmad Shāh believed that he had not only attained, but also personified the metaphorical “pearl of gnosis,” and that this was not only the basis of his regnal title, Pearl of Pearls, but it also represented the source of his political authority and the many supernatural abilities he was credited with. This argument concerning the intertwined esoteric and religio-political significance of Aḥmad Shāh's epithet is all the more persuasive when considered in the light of such factors as: his Sufi background; the various narratives of his accession that depict the holy man Ṣābir Shāh as

¹⁶⁷ One of Dawānī's disciples was an instructor to the father of Abū al-Faḥr al-Faḥrī, the great Mughal political ideologue active in the reign of the emperor Akbar. In light of the connection of the Mughal elite to Dawānī, it is unsurprising that the *Akhlāq-i Jalālī* became one of the core works in the curriculum for bureaucrats serving under Akbar and his successors; see Linda T. Darling, “Do Justice, Do Justice, For That Is Paradise’: Middle Eastern Advice for Indian Muslim Rulers,” *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 22, nos. 1–2 (2002): 8n; and Athar Abbas Rizvi, *Religious and Intellectual History of the Muslims in Akbar's Reign: With Special Reference to Abu'l Fazl, 1556–1605* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1975), 80, 197n. On the impact of Suhrawardī's doctrines on Mughal political theory, particularly Abū al-Faḥr's representation of Akbar as a divinely illumined monarch, see John F. Richards, “The Formulation of Imperial Authority under Akbar and Jahangir,” in *Kingship and Authority in South Asia*, ed. John F. Richards (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998), 296–305; and Irfan Habib, “A Political Theory for the Mughal Empire—A Study of the Ideas of Abu'l Fazl,” *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* 59 (1998): 329, 333, 339n.

¹⁶⁸ Dawānī's interest in Illuminationist philosophy and lettrism is detailed in Matthew Melvin-Koushki, “The Quest for a Universal Science: The Occult Philosophy of Ṣā'ib al-Dīn Turka Iṣfahānī (1369–1432) and Intellectual Millenarianism in Early Timurid Iran” (PhD diss., Yale University, 2012), 126–27, 247–61; and Matthew Melvin-Koushki, “The Occult Challenge to Philosophy and Messianism in Early Timurid Iran: Ibn Turka's Lettrism as a New Metaphysics,” in *Unity in Diversity: Mysticism, Messianism and the Construction of Religious Authority in Islam*, ed. Orkhan Mir-Kasimov (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 268–69. Also of relevance is Peacock's study of the impact of Illuminationist philosophy and lettrism on the politics of fourteenth century Anatolia; see Peacock, “Metaphysics and Rulership,” 101–36. On the political significance of Islamic mysticism and the occult sciences among Persianate dynasties such as the Timurids and Mughals, which preceded the Durrānī but appear to have left a noticeable imprint on Aḥmad Shāh's conception of kingship and authority, in addition to the foregoing, see İlker Evrim Binbaş, *Intellectual Networks in Timurid Iran: Sharaf al-Dīn 'Alī Yazdī and the Islamicate Republic of Letters* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 251–86; and Azfar Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign: Sacred Kingship and Sainthood in Islam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 23–55.

effecting his kingship through talismanic practices; the accounts in several Durrānī sources of his God-given gifts, including his ability to access the spiritual realm; and his mystical writings which attest to his engagement with Sufism and the occult sciences, including the political doctrines expounded by Illuminationist philosophers like Suhrawardī and Dawānī. Aḥmad Shāh's own relations and his followers with training in the intellectual strands of Sufism would certainly have recognized his claims to possess gnosis and divine favour and, by extension, would have understood the significance of his regnal epithet Durr-i Durrān. But because the title was related to Aḥmad Shāh's personal interests in Islamic mysticism and occult sciences, and necessitated familiarity with the technical terminology of theoretical Sufism, most authors writing in later times, who focused on Aḥmad Shāh's career as politician while overlooking his deeply spiritual and religious worldview that animated and gave meaning to his political ideals, must have been at a loss to identify, let alone elaborate on, its significance.

6.5: Aḥmad Shāh and the Durrānī Imperial Project

The Question of Legitimacy in Early Durrānī Times

While the foregoing analysis has drawn attention to the esoteric dimensions of the epithet “Durr-i Durrān,” it is important to understand how its adoption was intertwined with Aḥmad Shāh's imperial project—that is, the various strategies he employed to solidify his status as paramount ruler of the new Durrānī dispensation.

In the passage cited above from the *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī* on Aḥmad Shāh's lineage, Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī boasts about his patron's lofty descent from the legendary figure Sadō while asserting that leadership was his birthright since he belonged to an extended line of Sadōzay chiefs of the [Abdālī-]Durrānī confederacy. The idea of sovereignty as Aḥmad Shāh's

birthright is also expressed in other sections of the chronicle. For instance, after describing the insurrection (*ṭughyān*) of Nādir Shāh, the author asserts that Aḥmad Shāh was naturally chosen to succeed the latter because “the Nādirid dispensation had achieved grandeur and order through the forceful blows of their [i.e., the Abdālī-Durrānī warriors’] swords” (*dawlat-i Nādir Shāhī bi-ṣarb-i shamshēr-i mujāhadat wa mu‘āzadat-i īshān rawnaq wa intizām yāfta būd*) and because Aḥmad Shāh belonged to the noblest of the families of the confederacy.¹⁶⁹ The same idea is expressed in a verse of poetry found in a later passage of the text regarding rightful authority over the province of Herat, where Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī writes:

For that land [i.e., Herat] is the inheritance of our forefathers
Who else should possess rightful authority over it?

ki ān mulk mīrās-i ābā-yi māst
taṣarruf darū ghayr rā kī rawā-st?

This verse indicates that Aḥmad Shāh regarded sovereignty over the territory of Herat as his “hereditary right” (*mīrās*)—an allusion to the rule of his father, Muḥammad Zamān Khān, and elder brother, Zū al-Faqār Khān, over the province in the early eighteenth century.¹⁷⁰ Notwithstanding the misleading statements about the longevity of what was actually a brief period of Abdālī rule in Herat, the *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī* implies that a hierarchy was established within the confederacy in the pre-Durrānī period and that Aḥmad Shāh’s legitimacy was predicated on his noble descent from the Sadōzay clan whose chiefs had long led the Abdālī-Durrānī in particular and the Afghans in general.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁹ Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, ed. Murādōf, 1:22a–22b.

¹⁷⁰ Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, ed. Murādōf, 1:110a.

¹⁷¹ Notwithstanding their questionable historicity, the tracts on Abdālī-Durrānī genealogy that proliferated in the early Durrānī period go to great lengths to demonstrate Aḥmad Shāh’s chiefly lineage.

The emphasis Aḥmad Shāh placed on his noble ancestry seems contradictory considering his efforts to suppress memory of the Abdālī confederacy's contentious past. But while the name "Abdālī" appears to have been prohibited in part to undermine the authority of his Abdālī rivals who refused to acknowledge his status as paramount leader, Aḥmad Shāh nevertheless had no qualms about using his Sadōzay lineage to assert that his kingship was based on historical precedent. The emphasis on his chiefly Sadōzay lineage comes as no surprise considering that genealogy had long served as the idiom through which many Afghans understood and expressed their history. Moreover, as Aḥmad Shāh's power was largely dependent on the manpower of Afghans in general and his fellow Abdālī-Durrānī tribesmen in particular, it is natural that he would draw upon his noble descent in order to command the loyalty of his tribal following.

In addition to asserting that kingship was his birthright, Aḥmad Shāh maintained, somewhat paradoxically, that what qualified him to rule was in fact not his noble lineage but divine favour. This idea is expressed in the aforementioned verse attributed to Aḥmad Shāh from the *Tārīkh-i Shāh Walī Khān wazīr*, which reads: "Our glory is not derived from lineage/Our glory is derived from the grace of the Creator."¹⁷² The same idea is reiterated in the following verses recounted in the *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*: "Kingship is in the hands of God/To bequeath unto whomever He will/No one acquires kingship as an inheritance/Kingship is attained through providence, nothing else."¹⁷³ These verses, which clearly outline the divine mandate of the Durrānī monarch, raise the important question: Why would Aḥmad Shāh assert that it was his prerogative to rule based on his noble lineage yet at the same time insist that his kingship was not an inheritance but a gift from God?

¹⁷² Wakīlī Pōpalza'ī, *Tīmūr Shāh Durrānī*, 1:23.

¹⁷³ Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, ed. Murādōf, 2:568b.

Although Aḥmad Shāh's genealogical claims were carefully crafted in an effort to ensure the support of his tribal subjects, he was aware that his chiefly lineage alone could not secure his position as paramount leader of the Durrānī polity. After all, he was one of several influential Abdālī-Durrānī figures who could potentially have made similar genealogical claims to assert authority in the contentious post-Nādirid era. In seeking to establish supplementary forms of legitimacy, Aḥmad Shāh insisted that his kingship was a product of divine grace (*ināyat-i ilāhī*). Although this idea is expressed in many sources from the early Durrānī period, for clear evidence that Aḥmad Shāh regarded his rule as divinely mandated, one need not look beyond this famed couplet appearing consistently on his coinage that was widely disseminated in the Durrānī domains throughout his reign:

God the Incomparable, All-Powerful has decreed to King Aḥmad
Strike coin on silver and gold, from the tip of the fish to the moon

ḥukm shud az qādir-i bī-chūn bi-Aḥmad Pādshāh
*sikka zan bar sīm wa zar az awj-i mākī tā bi-māk*¹⁷⁴

By adopting this sacral model of kingship, Aḥmad Shāh exploited what had been a traditional basis of authority in the history of the Islamic world. However, the special emphasis on the favour God accorded him over and above his noble descent seems to have been designed specifically to undermine the claims of his Abdālī-Durrānī adversaries who utilized similar lineage-based forms of authority to challenge his rule. This is particularly true of the Durrānī khans Luqmān Khān, Shāh Walī Khān, and others who aspired to political authority on the basis of their shared ancestry and/or close genealogical ties with Aḥmad

¹⁷⁴ This couplet has been reproduced in a myriad of sources and studies that need not all be cited here. But for good examples of coins that date from the Aḥmad Shāh's reign and bear this couplet, see Whitehead, *Catalogue of Coins in the Panjab Museum, Lahore*, 3:13–48 passim, plates II–IV.

Shāh. This concern would explain the aforesaid verse attributed to Aḥmad Shāh: “The bejeweled sword can boast of itself/For it possesses the jewel of intrinsic value.”¹⁷⁵ That is to say, it is not the façade of the bejeweled sword, here a metaphor for noble lineage, that is worthy of boast, but the intrinsic jewel of the sword, or its “jewel of divine essence” (*jawhar-i zāt*), which Aḥmad Shāh, the “Pearl of Pearls,” was said to possess. By harmonizing the two core yet seemingly incongruous forms of legitimacy on which he depended—i.e., that his kingship was both a birthright and divinely ordained—Aḥmad Shāh established a broad basis of authority that could appeal to the sensibilities of his Afghan and non-Afghan subjects alike, while also trumping any potential claims to authority by his Abdālī-Durrānī rivals.

Although Aḥmad Shāh’s authority was based in part on his noble lineage, the primacy accorded to his divine right to rule suggests that his kingship was based chiefly on the force of his own personality, or what the political theorist Max Weber branded as charismatic authority. According to Weber, certain leaders in history exercised authority not by birthright or tradition but through “charisma,” the supernatural and highly personalized quality that could serve as a powerful revolutionary force but that was also highly unstable and required constant reaffirmation in order to maintain.¹⁷⁶ While charisma as a phenomenon is ubiquitous, in Persianate political contexts it was often portrayed as a “gift” or “grace” that God bestowed on chosen temporal rulers. In return for this grace, the

¹⁷⁵ Wakīlī Pōpalza’ī, *Tīmūr Shāh Durrānī*, 1:23; Wakīlī Pōpalza’ī, *Aḥmad Shāh*, 64–65; Barzigar, “Aḥmad Shāh,” 49. Note the employment of the term *jawhar* as an *ihām* or “ambiguity”; among its multiple connotations (i.e., pearl/gem/jewel, essence, substance, etc.), it can also mean “the lustre of a sword.” See Francis J. Steingass, *A Comprehensive Persian-English Dictionary, Including the Arabic Words and Phrases to be Met with in Persian Literature, Being Johnson and Richardson’s Persian, Arabic, & English Dictionary, Revised, Enlarged, and Entirely Reconstructed* (London, 1892; reprint, New Delhi: Manohar, 2006), 379.

¹⁷⁶ On the Weberian concept of charismatic authority and its application to the Timurids, see Subtelny, *Timurids in Transition*, 11–14. For further details, see Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, ed. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich, trans. Ephraim Fischhoff et al., 2 vols. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 1:215–16, 1:241–45, 2:1111–19; Robert C. Tucker, “The Theory of Charismatic Leadership,” *Daedalus* 97, no. 3 (1968): 731–56.

ruler or king was responsible for employing such royal attributes as wisdom and justice as a means of maintaining order in the world. Moreover, the ruler's charismatic authority was dependent on upholding and ruling in accordance with divine law; otherwise God would replace him with another more suitable candidate.¹⁷⁷

Sources produced at the court of Aḥmad Shāh are replete with evidence that he relied on a sacral model of kingship based on charismatic authority. Beyond promoting the idea that his rule was sanctioned by both God and spiritual figures like Šābir Shāh and Muḥammad ʿUmar Chamkanī, the *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī* enhances Aḥmad Shāh's religious credentials by presenting him variously as the protector of Islamic Law (*sharīʿa*), "guardian of religion" (*dīn-panāh*), and "guardian of Islam" (*Islām-panāh*). The chronicle also tends to characterize Aḥmad Shāh and the soldiers under his command as *ghāzīs* or "warriors of the faith" who helped advance his divine mandate. This sense of divine mission endowed the Durrānī polity with an aura of legality that would have appealed to Aḥmad Shāh's Muslim followers. It was also used to justify not only his *jihād* against non-Muslim adversaries like the Marathas and Sikhs but also the Durrānī campaigns against Muslim rivals in India, Iran, and Central Asia who did not acknowledge his divine mandate. Aḥmad Shāh's successes in battle against opponents only boosted his charisma and affirmed his divine right to rule.¹⁷⁸

Aḥmad Shāh also drew upon the Irano-Islamic tradition of kingship to reinforce his charismatic authority. This included his subscription to such concepts as kingly glory (*farr*)

¹⁷⁷ Woods, *The Aqqyunlu*, 4–6.

¹⁷⁸ According to Dawānī, the safeguarding of religion was, alongside military prowess and the ability to dispense justice, a requirement for those in positions of authority; see Dawānī, *Akhlāq-i Jalālī*, 221–23; and Woods, *The Aqqyunlu*, 89, 104–5, 233–34.

and fortune (*dawlat*) that God accords kings.¹⁷⁹ The use of both Islamic and Iranian symbols of temporal authority is in close conformity with the ancient Persian, and later Irano-Islamic, theory of religion and kingship being entwined, as exemplified by the famous Sasanian adage “Kingship and religion are twin brothers.”¹⁸⁰ The adoption of the Persian regnal title “shah” in tandem with the esoterically significant epithet “Durr-i Durrān” highlighted the perception that Aḥmad Shāh was a spiritually illuminated monarch, or sage-king, appointed by God “towards whom deference was incumbent.”¹⁸¹

The multiple bases of authority Aḥmad Shāh relied on are reflected in a letter he sent to the Ottoman sultan Muṣṭafā III.¹⁸² In the letter Aḥmad Shāh is likened to such ancient kings of Iran as Jamshīd, Darius, Alexander the Great, and Khusraw Anūshīrwān who are credited with possessing the royal attributes of intelligence, wisdom, and especially justice.¹⁸³ The letter goes on to suggest that it was his prerogative to sit upon the hereditary

¹⁷⁹ For kingly glory (*farr*) as a special quality of “luminous light” bestowed upon the kings of Iranian lore, see Ziai, “The Source and Nature of Authority,” 308, 315, 328–29, 331–32. On these and other attributes ascribed to Aḥmad Shāh, see Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, ed. Murādōf, 1:1b–4b.

¹⁸⁰ On the concept of religion and kingship as twins, see Subtelny, *Timurids in Transition*, 105; Ann K. S. Lambton, “Justice in the Medieval Persian Theory of Kingship,” *Studia Islamica* 17 (1962): 103; and Saīd Amir Arjomand, “Legitimacy and Political Organisation: Caliphs, Kings and Regimes,” in *The New Cambridge History of Islam*, vol. 4, *Islamic Cultures and Societies to the End of the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Robert Irwin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 233–35.

¹⁸¹ For the entire passage in which this quote appears, refer to the translation given on pp. 284–85 above. For the original text, see Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, ed. Murādōf, 1:12a.

¹⁸² Jalālī, *Nāma-i Aḥmad Shāh Bābā*, 4–7.

¹⁸³ Further comparisons of Aḥmad Shāh to the wise and just kings of Iranian lore are also found in the panegyric poem in the preface to the *Sharḥ-i Rukn al-yaqīn*; see Muḥammad Ghawṣ, *Sharḥ-i Rukn al-yaqīn*, fols. 6b–9a. The importance of the Just King (*pādshāh-i ‘ādil*) is highlighted in the famous maxim of “the circle of justice” according to which social, political, and even cosmic stability rested on a ruler’s ability to dispense justice. For a detailed exposition of the idea of the circle of justice, as well as references to it in the genre of advice literature, see Subtelny, *Timurids in Transition*, 106–7; Maria E. Subtelny, *Le monde est un jardin: Aspects de l’histoire culturelle de l’Iran médiéval* (Paris: Association pour l’Avancement des Études Iraniennes, 2002), 53–76; and Darling, “Do Justice,” 3–19.

throne of sovereignty (*awrang-i salṭanat-i mawrūs*) since his noble ancestors had, generation after generation (*naslan baʿda naslin wa baṭnan baʿda baṭnin*), exercised rule over the “exalted Afghan people” (*īl-i jalīl-i Afghān*). Situating Aḥmad’s ascendance within the context of the tumultuous politics of the post-Safavid period, the letter goes on to note that although the Safavid dynasts managed to resist decline for centuries, God ultimately removed them from power since they continued to “extend the hand of sensual pleasures” while neglecting their duty of enforcing divine law. The overthrow of the Safavids resulted in the spread of evil and corruption and gave rise to the despot Nādir Shāh whose reign is described as being fraught with incessant turmoil on account of his tyranny and injustice. In accordance with the prophetic hadith: “Kingship can endure with unbelief [but] cannot endure with tyranny,” it was not long before Nādir’s oppressive rule came to an end.¹⁸⁴ After the latter’s passing, the Afghan supporters of Aḥmad beseeched him to sit upon the hereditary throne of sovereignty in the manner of his forefathers, but he declined, preferring instead a life of solitude and devotion to God. However, as the affairs of the world were in utter ruin on account of Nādir’s troubled reign and required a capable ruler to restore order, in the end Aḥmad—following the example of the Rightly-Guided Caliphs who devoted themselves to God inwardly but attended to worldly affairs outwardly—agreed to accede to the throne.¹⁸⁵ The document then commemorates Aḥmad’s invasions of the Punjab, Kashmir, and Herat—with the latter being represented as his “hereditary domain” (*mamlakat-i mawrūs*) since it was the seat of governance (*pāytakht-i riyāsat wa ḥukūmat*) of his relatives and ancestors.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁴ For references to this hadith in the works attributed to Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad al-Ghazālī (d. 515/1111) and Dawānī, see Muḥammad Ghazālī, *Naṣīḥat al-mulūk*, ed. Jalāl al-Dīn Humāʿī (Tehran: Anjuman-i Āṣār Millī, 1351 H.sh./1972), 82; Dawānī, *Akhlāq-i Jalālī*, 256.

¹⁸⁵ Jalālī, *Nāma-i Aḥmad Shāh Bābā*, 11–14.

¹⁸⁶ Jalālī, *Nāma-i Aḥmad Shāh Bābā*, 26–27.

The letter thus outlines how Aḥmad Shāh represented his kingship both as his birthright and as based on his charismatic authority. Both claims were intended to bolster his legitimacy in the core lands under Durrānī authority, including the capital of Qandahar; but they also had regional implications that remain underappreciated. Specifically, the adoption of a universal model of kingship supported his efforts to establish a world-empire based on the steppe tradition of world-conquest. In this respect, Aḥmad followed the example of his predecessor Nādir Shāh who himself modeled his career after Tīmūr (d. 807/1405).¹⁸⁷ While Durrānī sources are highly critical of Nādir Shāh's "unjust" reign, it is clear that the many years Aḥmad spent in Nādirid service influenced his decision to model the early Durrānī polity after Nādir's state in many respects, including his continuation of the tradition of world-conquest.¹⁸⁸ That Aḥmad not only followed in Nādir's footsteps but also drew inspiration from the career of Tīmūr may be discerned from his decision to name his eldest son and eventual successor, who was born when he was in Nādir's service, after the Turko-Mongol warlord. Aḥmad also adopted such honorific titles as "world-conqueror" (*jahān-gushā*, *jahān-gīr*, etc.) and "Lord of the auspicious conjunction" (*ṣāhib-qirān*) that were associated with Tīmūr and many of his lineal and nominal successors.¹⁸⁹

As the head of an expanding nomadic polity that was sustained in large part through conquest, Aḥmad Shāh's appropriation of the tradition of world-conquest served his

¹⁸⁷ On the topic of Nādir Shāh modeling his career on that of Tīmūr, see Ernest Tucker, "Seeking a World Empire: Nadir Shah in Timur's Path," in *History and Historiography of Post-Mongol Central Asia and the Middle East: Studies in Honor of John E. Woods*, ed. Judith Pfeiffer and Sholeh A. Quinn, in collaboration with Ernest Tucker (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2006), 332–42; Tucker, *Nadir Shah's Quest for Legitimacy*, 9–14.

¹⁸⁸ McChesney, *Central Asia*, 141–42.

¹⁸⁹ For an explicit reference in the *TASH* to Tīmūr alongside his honorific, as well as a usage of this honorific in reference to Aḥmad Shāh, see Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, ed. Murādōf, 1:10a, 1:52a; also see Muḥammad Ghawṣ, *Sharḥ-i Rukn al-yaqīn*, fol. 4a. For evidence that Aḥmad Shāh regarded the line of Tīmūr with esteem, see Ghulām Ḥasan Ṣamīn, "Ahmad Shah," trans. Irvine, 48–49.

objectives of building a world-empire. More specifically, by associating himself with the legacy of famous conquerors like Tīmūr and Nādir, Aḥmad Shāh could claim entitlement to the territories of Khurasan, Hindustan and Turkistan (i.e., Central Asia) over which they had once ruled and that had since come under Durrānī authority. This strategic aim is outlined in various passages of the *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, including those that describe the diplomatic relations Aḥmad Shāh forged with neighbouring rulers. In the case of the Mughals, mere months after Nādir's assassination in 1160/1747, Aḥmad Shāh marched with his Durrānī army via Kabul, Peshawar, and Lahore to Sirhind and engaged the forces of the Mughal ruler Muḥammad Shāh (r. 1131–61/1719–48) in battle. While retreating to Kabul by early 1161/1748 without having achieved his ultimate goal, Aḥmad Shāh initially launched this invasion as the nominal heir to Nādir Shāh and inheritor of the territories west of Delhi that Muḥammad Shāh had ceded to Nādir during his invasion of India in 1150–51/1738–39.¹⁹⁰ An identical pretext was used for several subsequent Durrānī campaigns in India, including the invasion of Delhi in 1170/1757 when Aḥmad Shāh married Ḥazrat Bēgum, a daughter of the former Mughal emperor Muḥammad Shāh, while also arranging for his son Tīmūr Shāh to marry Gawharnisā Bēgum, a daughter of the sitting Mughal emperor ʿAzīz al-Dīn Muḥammad ʿĀlamgīr II (r. 1167–73/1754–59).¹⁹¹ By establishing a genealogical connection to

¹⁹⁰ Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, ed. Murādōf, 1:59b–61a; also see Gommans, *The Rise of the Indo-Afghan Empire*, 55, 57–59.

¹⁹¹ Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, ed. Murādōf, 2:331a–35a; Ghulām ʿAlī Khān, *Shāh ʿĀlam-nāma*, ed. Harinath De (Calcutta: Asiatic Society, 1912–14), 28–29. Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī does not indicate the name of ʿĀlamgīr II's daughter and there is some disagreement in the sources about her identity. Ghulām ʿAlī Āzād mentions in passing that Tīmūr Shāh was married to ʿĀlamgīr II's niece, though he was likely mistaken; see Ghulām ʿAlī Āzād, *Khizāna-i ʿāmirā*, ed. Nīkūbakht and Bēg, 130–31. In the *Shāh ʿĀlam-nāma*, her name is given as Gawhar Ārāy Bēgum. Singh, apparently basing himself on Sarkar, suggests that her name was Gawhar Afrūz Bānū Bēgum. According to the epitaph on her tombstone at the Bagh-i Babur in Kabul, the princess's name was, in fact, Gawharnisā. For more on this tombstone, which bears the date 1202/1788, see M. J. Darmesteter, "Inscriptions de Caboul: Epitaphes de l'Empereur Bāber et d'autres Princes Mogols," *Journal Asiatique*, 8th ser., 11, no. 3 (1888): 501–3. For further details on Tīmūr's marriage to Gawharnisā, see Singh, *Ahmad Shah Durrani*,

the Mughal dynasty that claimed lineal descent from Tīmūr, Aḥmad Shāh enhanced the prestige of the Durrānī royal family. Moreover, by ratifying with ʿĀlamgīr II the “Nādirid arrangement” (*dastūr-i Nādiriyya*) originally agreed upon by Muḥammad Shāh, Aḥmad Shāh endeavored to establish a sense of continuity and legality to his claims of authority over north India as Nādir’s nominal heir while also securing the status of the Durrānī monarchs as overlords of the Mughals.¹⁹²

A similar policy was followed with the Afshārid rulers in Khurasan after Aḥmad Shāh invaded in 1163/1750 and 1167–68/1754–55 under the pretext of restoring Nādir’s grandson, Shāhrukh, to power. While Aḥmad Shāh was forced to retreat during the campaign in 1163/1750, he succeeded in conquering Mashhad in 1167–68/1754–55 at which time he installed Shāhrukh Afshārī as a puppet ruler. In response to an anti-Durrānī insurrection led by Shāhrukh’s son Naṣr Allāh, allegedly against his father’s wishes, Aḥmad Shāh launched another invasion of Mashhad in 1184/1771. On this occasion he arranged for Tīmūr Shāh to marry Shāhrukh’s daughter, Gawharshād Bēgum, thus securing the status of the Durrānī as masters of the Afshārids of Mashhad and its dependencies.¹⁹³ Aḥmad Shāh also assumed the mantle of Nādir Shāh’s nominal heir when he asserted authority over the lands of Turkistan lying south of the Oxus River that Nādir had controlled since 1150/1737; this included the tenuous relations he established with local Uzbek warlords like the Mīngid *amīr*, Ḥājji Khān

168–69, 185; Sarkar, *Fall of the Mughal Empire*, 2:102–3, 2:128; Wakīlī Pōpalzaʿī, *Tīmūr Shāh Durrānī*, 1:30–34, 1:69–72; Sayyid Makhdūm Rahīn, “Yak ‘ahd-nāma-i tārikhi,” *Yaghma* 294 (1351 H.sh./1973): 753–56.

¹⁹² For an English translation of those passages of Anand Ram’s *Tazkira* that offer a detailed account of Nādir Shāh’s invasion of India as well as his negotiations with Muḥammad Shāh, see Elliot, *The History of India*, 8:76–98.

¹⁹³ Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, ed. Murādōf, 2:618b–19a. Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī does not specify the daughter’s name, but it is given in the *MTbN* as Gawharshād Bēgum; see Gulistāna, *Mujmal al-tawārikh*, ed. Mudarris-Raḥawī, 119.

Mīng, who for several years governed the towns of Maymana and Balkh as his tributary.¹⁹⁴ By upholding his status as Nādir's successor and temporarily stabilizing the western and northern frontiers of the Durrānī polity in this way, Aḥmad Shāh could focus his attention on maintaining and extending authority over north India, which served as the breadbasket of his fledgling empire.

To summarize, while Aḥmad Shāh drew upon his noble lineage to legitimize his rule in the eyes of his Afghan following, he also relied upon a sacral model of kingship to garner support both within and beyond his tribal support base. This universal model of kingship suited Aḥmad Shāh's imperial project, which was to create a world-empire modeled after the polity established by Nādir Shāh. The tributary relationships Aḥmad Shāh forged with Afshārids, Mughals, and Mīngids are examples of how he coopted and exploited the Timurid and Nādirid traditions of world-conquest in order to broaden his of base authority in the territories of Iran, India, and Central Asia that fell under the suzerainty of the Durrānī state.

The Durrānī Patrimonial Household State

As John E. Woods writes in his study of the Āq Quyūnlū confederacy, one of the central themes of clan-based polities is the tension between ruler and chieftain. In tracing the evolution of this contentious relationship, Woods notes that at the beginning of his career, the ruler is dependent on the military support of social groups outside of his own family. He gains their support by forming a network of kinship relations and marriage alliances to cement what would otherwise be volatile ties. To ensure the loyalty of the chieftain, the ruler grants him access to booty and gifts. To stabilize his own position, the

¹⁹⁴ For additional details on Aḥmad Shāh's activities in Turkistan, see Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, ed. Murādōf, 1:125b–29b, 1:167a–68a, 2:353b–57a; McChesney, *Waqf in Central Asia*, 198–231; Lee, *The 'Ancient Supremacy'*, 62–91; Gommans, *The Rise of the Indo-Afghan Empire*, 62–63.

ruler forms a bodyguard devoted to his person and a bureaucracy committed to his political goals. The bodyguard and bureaucracy are used to initiate measures designed to curb the influence of the tribesmen that brought him to power. These measures include curtailing their privileges and altering their clan structure to diminish their influence. The ruler then endeavors to resolve tensions with the chieftains through conciliation or brute force.¹⁹⁵

Although there are important differences between the Āq Quyūnlū and Durrānī confederacies, the formation of the Durrānī polity follows the trajectory outlined by Woods. Around the time of Aḥmad Shāh's accession in 1160/1747, the Abdālī-cum-Durrānī confederacy, or *ulūs*, consisted of approximately 60,000 families. The centre of the *ulūs* was the paramount clan, the Sadōzay, who claimed descent from a legendary common ancestor, Sadō. According to local tradition, Sadō was both a man of piety and a just warrior naturally suited to leadership; as such, the chieftaincy of the Durrānī *ulūs* became the special prerogative of Sadō and his descendants, known collectively as the Sadōzay. The ruling Sadōzay clan, which later authors described as the "chiefly lineage" (*khān khēl*) of the Durrānī *ulūs*, resembled the "golden clan" (*altūn urūq*) of the Chinggisids.¹⁹⁶

The Sadōzay represent one of several clans of the *ulūs*, which was organized along segmentary lines and comprised of what some anthropologists refer to as minimal lineages and maximal lineages. Beyond the politically prominent Pōpalzay (alternatively spelled Fōfalzay) clan, of which the Sadōzay and Bāmīzay were sub-clans, the *ulūs* was comprised of other principal clans such as: the Alakōzay, the clan of Aḥmad Shāh's mother; 'Alīzay;

¹⁹⁵ Woods, *The Aqquyunlu*, 1–24. This complex, and often contentious relationship between Aḥmad Shāh and his successors, on the one hand, and their tribal Durrānī subjects, on the other, is also briefly outlined in Barfield, *Afghanistan*, 103–5.

¹⁹⁶ For the Sadōzay as the *khān khēl*, see Elphinstone, *An Account of the Kingdom of Caubul*, 397. On the "golden clan" or "golden lineage" of the Mongols, see Thomas T. Allsen, *Commodity and Exchange in the Mongol Empire: A Cultural History of Islamic Textiles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 61.

Bārakzay; and Nūrzay. Beyond these prominent clans were various smaller clans and sub-clans such as the Achakzay, purported to be originally a sub-clan of the Bārakzay, as well as the Khugiyānī, Mākū, and Maḥmūd̄zay.¹⁹⁷

As with many of the state formations that preceded it, the polity established at Aḥmad Shāh's accession was organized along Weberian, patrimonial lines.¹⁹⁸ According to Max Weber's theory, patrimonialism is a form of political organization in which authority is highly personal and in which the state resembles a patriarchal family. A central feature of patrimonial states was the imperial family or patrimonial household whose members rendered service to the person of the ruler and helped him maintain his authority. In return, the household could expect rewards, including cash, grants of lands, and, as is often the case with nomadic polities, access to booty acquired during periodic campaigns.¹⁹⁹

Aḥmad Shāh initially rose to power with the support of a loyal group of followers outside of his Sadōzay kin and who formed the core of his household. The most influential of these groups was the Pōpalzay, or members of the maximal lineage to which the Sadōzay belonged, who received many of the senior appointments in the Durrānī military which was modeled after its Safavid and Nādirid antecedents. Aḥmad Shāh appointed his old

¹⁹⁷ On the Achakzay as a sub-clan of the Bārakzay, see note 234 below. Also see §1.6 for further details on the organization of the Durrānī confederacy.

¹⁹⁸ Weber's model has been used to analyze various pre-modern dynasties both within and beyond the Islamicate world. Certain authors have also described Aḥmad Shāh's rule as a form of patrimonialism, but typically only in passing and without offering any detailed analysis of the features of the Durrānī polity. For more recent examples, see Amin Saikal, *Modern Afghanistan: A History of Struggle and Survival* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2004), 4–5; Misdaq, *Afghanistan*, 19–21, 48–49; Nazif M. Shahrani, "Afghanistan to 1919," in *The New Cambridge History of Islam*, vol. 5, *The Islamic World in the Age of Western Dominance*, ed. Francis Robinson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 204. Amin Saikal states Aḥmad Shāh's rule was "independent of any objectively rational goal" while Misdaq suggests "no bureaucratic state procedure as Weber points out was present." But as this chapter's analysis of the Durrānī administration seeks to show, Aḥmad Shāh did, in fact, attempt to implement a rationalized bureaucracy, however rudimentary it may have been.

¹⁹⁹ Weber, *Economy and Society*, 1:231–32, 2:1006–69; also see Subtelny, *Timurids in Transition*, 33–35; Arjomand, "Legitimacy and Political Organisation," 235, 272–73.

acquaintance Bagī Khān, renamed Shāh Walī Khān, as Head of the Imperial Guard (*kishīkchī bāshī*) and *ashraf al-wuzarāʾ*. Other prominent Pōpalzay officials included: Khān Jān Khān, also known as Khān Jahān Khān, who was appointed Commander (*sardār*) of the Durrānī army; ʿAbd Allāh Khān, who was named Head Chamberlain (*ishik-āqāsī bāshī*) and Head of the Dīwān (*dīwān bēgī*); and Jaʿfar Khān, who was named Head of the Slave Troops (*qūllar-āqāsī*) and Head of the Tribal Forces (*qūrchī bāshī*). The chiefs of other Durrānī clans were also represented within the patrimonial household. Ḥājji Nawāb Khān Alakōzay was appointed Supervisor of the Imperial Treasury (*ṣāhib-jamʿ-i ṣandūq-khāna-i sarkār-i khāṣṣa-i sharīfa*); Shāh Pasand Khān Ishāqzay was appointed Chief Equerry (*mīr-ākhūr bāshī*); Barkhurdār Khān Achakzay was appointed Head Gatekeeper (*qābūchī bāshī*).²⁰⁰

Besides describing them with such honorifics as “stalwart *amīrs*” (*ʿumdat al-umarāʾ*) or “pillars of the state” (*arkān-i dawlat*), Aḥmad Shāh’s court chronicler Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī distinguished members of the patrimonial household from the generality of followers through the use of various terms of endearment, such as *raftiq* (friend), *hawā-khwāh* (supporter), *bandagān* (slaves), *fidawiyān* (devotees) and *muqarrab al-khāqān* (intimate of the emperor), to demonstrate their close proximity to the person of the shah. The patrimonial household represented the class of Durrānī elite whose chief duty it was to serve and protect the ruler.

One of the central institutions of the Durrānī patrimonial household regime was the *kishīk* or the imperial guard corps. This institution dates back to the period of Mongol rule in

²⁰⁰ See Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, ed. Murādōf, 1:32a. These are examples of some of the main appointments at the time of Aḥmad Shāh’s accession, though there were many others. It should also be noted that while many of these appointments were more or less fixed, some were liable to change.

Central Asia and Iran and survived through the Timurid, Safavid, and Nādirid periods.²⁰¹ In the Durrānī context, the institution of the *kishik* was clearly a holdover from the Nādirid era. The *Tārīkh-i Shāh Walī Khān wazīr* indicates that during the reign of Nādir Shāh, Shāh Walī Khān and one hundred of his fellow Bāmīzay clansmen served in the *kishik* or guard corps of Aḥmad Khān while he was stationed in Māzandarān. When Aḥmad Khān became shah, many of these same Bāmīzay were admitted into his permanent guard corps (*hamēsha-kishik*).²⁰²

As in the Mongol period, the *kishik* under the Durrānī was made up of Aḥmad Shāh's most trusted advisors; and as it combined the roles of military elite, royal bodyguard, and imperial administration, it was at the core of the Durrānī polity.²⁰³ Shāh Walī Khān, who served as both *ashraf al-wuzarā'* and *kishikchī bāshī*, exemplifies the administrative and military functions of the *kishik*. As *kishikchī bāshī* he convened assemblies at the *kishik-khāna*, or guardhouse, with individual guards, or *kishikchīs*, and other dignitaries to discuss affairs of government with the shah, including the administration of the household state. He also oversaw the *hamēsha-kishik*, or permanent bodyguard, which was in attendance on the person of the shah at all times.²⁰⁴ As *ashraf al-wuzarā'*, Shāh Walī Khān was the chief official

²⁰¹ For details on the *kishik* in the Mongol and Timurid periods, see Charles Melville, "The *Keshig* in Iran: The Survival of the Royal Mongol Household," in *Beyond the Legacy of Genghis Khan*, ed. Linda Komaroff (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 135–66; Subtelny, *Timurids in Transition*, 18–24. The institution survived well into the Safavid and post-Safavid periods. In fact, Nādir Shāh was murdered by disgruntled officers from his *hamēsha-kishik*; see Mahdī Khān, *Jahāngushā-yi Nādirī*, 426; Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, ed. Murādōf, 1:16b–18a.

²⁰² Wakīlī Pōpalza'i, *Timūr Shāh Durrānī*, 2:339. Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī confirms that Shāh Walī Khān was appointed as *kishikchī bāshī* at the outset of Aḥmad Shāh's reign; see Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, ed. Murādōf, 1:32a.

²⁰³ Subtelny, *Timurids in Transition*, 20.

²⁰⁴ Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, ed. Murādōf, 2:525a. For further details on the office of the *hamēsha-kishik*, see Jābirī-Anṣārī, *Mīrzā Raḡf'ā's Dastūr al-mulūk*, trans. Marcinkowski, 203–4; Minorsky, *Tadhkirat al-mulūk*, 34, 75.

presiding over Aḥmad Shāh's Dīwān, or the administrative body of the Durrānī state, which will be described in further detail below.

Aḥmad Shāh was tied to the Durrānī chiefs through bonds of marriage. His father, Zamān Khān, had been married to the daughter of an Alakōzay chief, and this alliance would certainly have been exploited to ensure Alakōzay support. Among the other alliances Aḥmad Shāh forged with the Durrānī chiefs that are mentioned in the *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī* is crown prince Tīmūr's marriage to the daughter of the Bārakzay chief 'Abd al-Ḥabīb b. Ḥājji Jamāl Khān;²⁰⁵ the marriage of his second son, Sulaymān, to Bilqīs Bēgum, the daughter of the grand wazīr Shāh Walī Khān Bāmīzay;²⁰⁶ and the marriages of prince Parwīz to a daughter of 'Uẓmat Khān 'Alīzay, and of prince Shihāb to a daughter of Ḥasan Khān Alakōzay.²⁰⁷ Such alliances were intended to bind members of the Durrānī patrimonial household to the ruler and thus strengthen what may otherwise have developed into volatile relations.

One of the central features of charismatic authority is its rejection of "anything that restricts the mission and personal will of the leader."²⁰⁸ When Aḥmad Shāh's efforts to assert paramount authority were met with resistance, he attempted to placate those chiefs who challenged his status. But when such efforts failed, he repressed dissidence by force. According to Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, he initially bestowed favour on the Pōpalzay rebels Muḥabbat Khān and Mānū Khān, who had been awarded high military ranks. But "on account of satanic whisperings" (*bi-wasāwis-i shayṭānī*), they decided to rebel against him.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁵ Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, ed. Murādōf, 2:585a.

²⁰⁶ Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, ed. Murādōf, 2:589a; Wakīlī Pōpalza'i, *Durrat al-Zamān*, 229; Wakīlī Pōpalza'i, *Tīmūr Shāh Durrānī*, 1:134–35.

²⁰⁷ Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, ed. Murādōf, 2:622a–23a.

²⁰⁸ For the quote in question, see Subtelny, *Timurids in Transition*, 14; also refer to Weber, *Economy and Society*, 1:241–54, 2:1135–39.

²⁰⁹ Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, ed. Murādōf, 1:27a.

By emphasizing their rejection of Aḥmad Shāh's largesse, the author justifies his patron's brute repression of the Pōpalzay chiefs. On the other hand, their co-conspirator, 'Abd al-Raḥmān Bārakzay, was conciliated and appointed Head of the Heavy Artillery (*tūpchī bāshī*).

These examples affirm that Aḥmad Shāh's assumption of rule was met with resistance, especially among leading figures of what had been the Abdālī confederacy. For this reason, he devised other methods to curb the influence of the tribesmen who had helped him come to power. As already noted, on his arrival in Qandahar, Aḥmad Shāh prohibited the use of the name Abdālī and thus prevented his rivals from drawing upon their lineages, status, and loyalties from the pre-Durrānī period to challenge his authority. To cement his status as paramount ruler of the *ulūs*, Aḥmad Shāh asserted his status as a highborn and divinely inspired monarch—King, Pearl of Pearls (*Shāh Durr-i Durrān*)—who transcended petty tribal politics. To cement his status as paramount ruler, Aḥmad Shāh renamed the *ulūs* Durrānī, which was derived from his regnal title. The new Durrānī confederacy evolved out of the old Abdālī confederacy but was devoid of pre-existing loyalties. The renaming of the *ulūs* was a decisive step towards ensuring his followers would forego their old tribal allegiances and profess devotion only to him. In this respect, Aḥmad Shāh may be regarded as the eponymous founder of the Durrānī *ulūs*. As the members of his patrimonial household stood to benefit most from Aḥmad Shāh's kingship and the formation of the new Durrānī dispensation, they enforced the prohibition of the use of the old name "Abdālī" and the implementation of "Durrānī" in its place. It is for this reason that the old name is absent in all extant documents produced at the court of Aḥmad Shāh.

The Durrānī Military Establishment

Aḥmad Shāh's prohibition of the use of the name Abdālī and his formation of a patrimonial household answerable directly to him were among several policies he

introduced to consolidate his status as paramount ruler in the face of dissidence among his tribal following. Another was the gradual incorporation of non-Durrānī ethnic elements into what was an increasingly diverse military. This may be seen in Aḥmad Shāh's creation of a professional corps of slave-soldiers, or *ghulāms*, who were valued for their fighting abilities and loyalty. In the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ʿālī-shān*, ʿAlī Muḥammad Khān notes that although Aḥmad Shāh rose to power with the support of the Abdālī-Durrānī, their influence diminished due to his employment of Turkic, Uzbek, and Iranian soldiers formerly in the service of Nādir Shāh as his *ghulām-khāna*, or corps of slave-soldiers.²¹⁰ In his account of the Abdālī, Leech similarly notes how Aḥmad Shāh relied on 12,000 Iranians in his *ghulām-khāna* as a check on the Durrānī.²¹¹

It should be emphasized that ʿAlī Muḥammad Khān and Leech were writing in the nineteenth century and their insinuation that the slave-soldier institution of Aḥmad Shāh was the exclusive domain of non-Durrānī is anachronistic since it was based on military reforms initiated later, in the reign of Tīmūr Shāh, who relied on non-Durrānī soldiers in his *ghulām-khāna*.²¹² Under Aḥmad Shāh, however, Durrānī tribesmen were still well represented in the corps of slave-soldiers. Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī indicates that Aḥmad Shāh appointed Jaʿfar Khān Pōpalzay as Head of the slave troops (*qūllar-āqāsī*)—the singular form “*qūl*” being the Turkish equivalent of the Arabic and Persian *ghulām*—at the onset of his reign. Jaʿfar Khān participated with several other Durrānī *amīrs* in Aḥmad Shāh's campaigns against dissidents in Baluchistan in 1171/1758. Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī describes a contingent of slave-

²¹⁰ ʿAlī Muḥammad Khān, *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ʿālī-shān*, fols. 75b–76a.

²¹¹ Leech, “An Account of the Early Abdalees,” 470.

²¹² Rawlinson, “Report on the Dooranee Tribes,” 518–19. While the Qizilbash were well represented in Tīmūr's *ghulām-khāna*, it should be noted that he also relied on multiple other non-Durrānī groups; see Elphinstone, *An Account of the Kingdom of Caubul*, 530–31; Jos J. L. Gommans, “Indian Warfare and Afghan Innovation during the Eighteenth Century,” *Studies in History*, n.s., 11, no. 2 (1995): 270–78.

soldiers (*dasta-i ghulām*) consisting of Achakzay, Ishāqzay, and Jawānshēr troops who were dispatched against the Balūchīs.²¹³ This reference to Achakzay and Ishāqzay alongside the Jawānshērs—a Qizilbash clan led by Amīr Khān b. Walī Muḥammad Khān, who served as *chindawul bāshī*, or Head of the Rear Guard—indicates that both Durrānī and non-Durrānī soldiers were used in the ranks of the *qūllar*, or *ghulāms*, in Aḥmad Shāh’s army.²¹⁴

While Durrānī tribesmen served as *ghulāms* under Aḥmad Shāh, he does seem to have employed growing numbers of non-Durrānī soldiers—largely (though not solely) Qizilbash groups from Iran who in many cases gained experience serving in the military of Nādir Shāh—in his corps of slave-soldiers. A prominent example is the eunuch Maḥmūd Khān Khwāja-sarā. The latter’s father had been a Kurdish notable from Khurasan who revolted against Nādir Shāh. After putting down this revolt, Nādir captured the rebel’s son, Maḥmūd Khān, castrated him, and had him serve as a eunuch guarding the royal harem. When Aḥmad Shāh invaded Khurasan in 1167–68/1754–55, Maḥmūd Khān entered the latter’s service as his Head Chamberlain (*ishik-āqāsi*). He rendered invaluable service to Aḥmad Shāh, for which he was also appointed *qūllar-āqāsi*.²¹⁵ Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī and another contemporary author, Muḥammad Jaʿfar Shāmlū, who also spent several years in the service of Aḥmad Shāh, attest to the prominent role played by the cavalry under the command of Maḥmūd Khān Qūllar-āqāsi during the Battle of Panipat in 1174/1761 against the Maratha army. Maḥmūd Khān and his slave-soldier cavalry, said to number 8,000–9,000 men, were stationed at the rear of Aḥmad Shāh’s position; when the latter’s army was on the brink of

²¹³ Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, ed. Murādōf, 2:387a.

²¹⁴ Walī Muḥammad Khān was killed at Shibirghān during the Durrānī campaigns in Turkistan in the year 1170/1756–57; see Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, ed. Murādōf, 2:355b–56b; for more on Walī Muḥammad Khān and the Jawānshērs, see Wakīlī Pōpalzaʿī, *Aḥmad Shāh*, 444–51.

²¹⁵ Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, ed. Murādōf, 1:264b–65a.

defeat, Maḥmūd Khān and his cavalry entered the thick of battle and were decisive in repelling the Maratha attack.²¹⁶

Aḥmad Shāh's growing reliance on non-Durrānī slave-soldiers was part of a broader policy of forming an ethnically heterogeneous military in order to ensure that one ethnic element did not predominate and potentially impede the ruler's coercive capacity. This age-old policy is outlined in the Persian advice literature, or "mirrors for princes." A pertinent example is the *Siyar al-mulūk* attributed to the well-known political ideologue of the Seljuq period, Niẓām al-Mulk (d. 485/1092). In the section of this work on the topic of composing an army of every race (*andar lashkar dāshtan az har jins*), Niẓām al-Mulk stresses the need for kings to maintain an ethnically diverse army so that the various contingents would vie with one another for the ruler's patronage. He depicts the Ghaznavid ruler Sulṭān Maḥmūd of Ghazna as a model to be emulated in this respect, for he is credited with forming an army comprised of Turks, Khurasanis, Arabs, Hindus, Ghūrīs, and Daylamites. Each group sought to outdo the other on the battlefield and this internal contest is depicted as the main source of Sulṭān Maḥmūd's strength.²¹⁷ A similar view is expounded in the *Qābūs-nāma*, composed around the same time as the *Siyar al-mulūk* in 474/1082–83, wherein the author, Kay Kā'ūs (d. ca. 477/1084–85), advises against the use of a royal bodyguard made up of a single "race," lest the ruler become subservient to his troops. The solution, according to Kay Kā'ūs, was to

²¹⁶ Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, ed. Murādōf, 2:495a–96a; Muḥammad Ja'far Shāmlū, *Manāzil al-futūḥ*, MS, British Library, Add. 16,876, fols. 2b, 20b–21b.

²¹⁷ Abū 'Alī Ḥasan Ṭūsī Niẓām al-Mulk, *Siyar al-mulūk (Siyāsāt-nāma)*, ed. Hubert Darke (Tehran: Bungāh-i Tarjuma wa Nashr-i Kitāb, 1340 H.sh./1962), 128; Hubert Darke, trans., *The Book of Government, or Rules for Kings: The Siyar al-Muluk, or Siyasat-nama of Nizam al-Mulk* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978), 103–4; Reuvin Amitai, "Armies and Their Economic Basis in Iran and the Surrounding Lands, c. 1000–1500," in *The New Cambridge History of Islam*, vol. 3, *The Eastern Islamic World: Eleventh to Eighteenth Centuries*, ed. David O. Morgan and Anthony Reid (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 544.

form a bodyguard made up of all races in order that each holds the other in check and, through fear of one another, submits to the will of the ruler.²¹⁸

These books of advice, which exerted a discernable influence on mirrors produced in later periods, reflect the diverse array of ethnic elements that characterized many of the armies of the Islamic world. Indeed, polyethnic armies were a common feature of various early-modern polities on which the early Durrānī military was modeled, including that of Nādir Shāh whose army was arguably the largest in the world at the time.²¹⁹ Over the course of his reign, Nādir became ever more reliant on the Sunni Uzbek and Afghan contingents of his army who served as a check on the influence of the Qizilbash. As detailed in Chapter 5, the Abdālī were well represented in the aforesaid Afghan contingent, and Nādirid chroniclers attribute to them a significant role in several of Nādir Shāh's campaigns.

Because Aḥmad Shāh spent several years in Nādir's army, he would have been aware of the risks involved in relying on a monolithic army as well as the benefits of employing various ethnic groups in a diverse military. He thus opted to follow the Nādirid example.²²⁰ While the Abdālī-Durrānī formed the core of his army, Aḥmad Shāh continued to enlist non-Durrānī soldiers on a regular basis throughout his reign. In the *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī refers to a group of Kābulī and Qizilbash soldiers formerly in the service of Nādir Shāh who joined the Durrānī army around the time of Aḥmad Shāh's accession in 1160/1747.²²¹ The soldiers are presumably related to the Kābulī and Qizilbash fighters

²¹⁸ Kay Kā'ūs ibn Iskandar, *The Naṣīḥat-nāma, Known as Qābūs Nāma, of Kai Kā'ūs b. Iskandar b. Qābūs b. Washmgīr*, ed. Reuben Levy (London: Luzac, 1951), 134; Kay Kā'ūs ibn Iskandar, *A Mirror for Princes: The Qābūs Nāma*, trans. Reuben Levy (London: Cresset, 1951), 230; see also Bosworth, *The Ghaznavids*, 107.

²¹⁹ Michael Axworthy, "The Army of Nader Shah," *Iranian Studies* 40, no. 5 (2007): 635–46.

²²⁰ On the topic of Aḥmad Shāh modeling his army after that of Nādir Shāh, see also Gommans, "Indian Warfare and Afghan Innovation," 269–70, 273–74.

²²¹ Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, ed. Murādōf, 1:24a–25a.

mentioned in the chronicle as having accompanied a force led by Mukhliṣ Khān Durrānī on its expedition to Turkistan in 1163/1750–51.²²² Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī notes that during the Durrānī invasion of Mashhad in 1167/1754–55, a considerable number of fighters from the various regions of Khurasan and Turkistan joined the invading army.²²³ He also describes a contingent of 5,000 Uzbek soldiers as having fought with Khān Jahān Khān during a campaign in Turkistan in 1169/1755–56.²²⁴ The broad array of ethnic elements is captured in a passage of the *Manāzil al-futūḥ* that describes Aḥmad Shāh's army at the Battle of Panipat in 1174/1761. The author, Muḥammad Ja'far Shāmlū, who at the time had been serving as *Madār al-mahāmm* or “Manager of important affairs” for the Durrānī commander Shāh Pasand Khān Ishāqzay, states that the latter's contingent consisted of the following ethnic, tribal, and/or regional groups: “Qizilbāsh; Abdālī [i.e., Durrānī]; Chahār Ūymāq of Harāt; Marwī; Darra-jazīnī;²²⁵ Wardak; Uzbek; Charkhī;²²⁶ Hōtakī; and Ghilzay.”²²⁷

Besides the obvious function of improving the chances of success on the battlefield, Aḥmad Shāh's employment of diverse ethnic elements in the different contingents of his military—whether the slave corps or others—was intended to ensure that any one group,

²²² Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī also indicates that some Qizilbash soldiers who had been in Herat at the time of Aḥmad Shāh's invasion of the city in 1163/1750 subsequently joined the Durrānī army and accompanied Mukhliṣ Khān on his campaigns in Turkistan. See Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, ed. Murādōf, 1:128b.

²²³ Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, ed. Murādōf, 1:231b.

²²⁴ Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, ed. Murādōf, 1:301a.

²²⁵ Lit., natives of Darra-jaz. Darra-jaz, or Darra-gaz as it is sometimes spelled, is a district north of Mashhad that is well-known for being Nādir Shāh's birthplace; see Mahdī Khān, *Jahāngushā-yi Nādirī*, 27; Muḥammad Kāẓim, *Ālam-ārā-yi Nādirī*, ed. Riyāḥī, 1:4–6; Lockhart, *Nadir Shah*, 18–20; Avery, “Nadir Shah and the Afsharid Legacy,” 3–4.

²²⁶ Wardak is a district located to the west of Kabul, while Charkh is located in the district of Lōgar to its south; see Adamec, *Historical and Political Gazetteer of Afghanistan*, 6:133, 6:802–3.

²²⁷ Muḥammad Ja'far Shāmlū, *Manāzil al-futūḥ*, fol. 12b. For details on Muḥammad Ja'far Shāmlū and his *Manāzil al-futūḥ*, see Giorgio Rota, “The Man Who Would Not Be King: Abu'l-Fath Sultan Muhammad Mirza Safavi in India,” *Iranian Studies* 32, no. 4 (1999): 527n83.

especially the Durrānī, did not predominate. The resultant multi-ethnic army, which numbered upwards of 100,000 men, was the main instrument of Aḥmad Shāh's power, as it enabled him to effectively manage the potentially volatile elements among his tribal following, to secure his status as paramount ruler of the Durrānī and their subordinates, and to thereby concentrate power in his own hands.

The Durrānī Tribal Structure

An important Durrānī-era source on the structure of the Afghan tribes is the *Aḥwāl-i aqwām-i chahārgāna-i Afghān* of Maḥmūd al-Mūsawī. This treatise divides the Afghans into four broad categories: the Durrānī, Ghilzay, Bar-Durrānī, and Yūsufzay, whom the author inexplicably identifies as “Sūr” Afghans. The work's categorization of the Afghans is problematic, not least because it reduces the multitude of tribes that fell under the nomenclature “Afghan” into only four groups. Rather than accurately representing the complex organization of Afghan tribal society, this neat fourfold division appears to represent how Durrānī officials categorized the Afghan tribes for administrative purposes. This administrative concern is reflected, for instance, in the author's remarks that the Yūsufzay inhabited “the difficult-to-traverse mountains” (*kōh-hā-yi ṣaʿb al-masālik*) of India's northwest frontier, and since the revenues generated in these lands did not justify the expenses required to extract taxes therefrom, the Yūsufzay remained autonomous.²²⁸

A significant aspect of the treatise is its identification of most Afghan tribes—excluding the Ghilzay and some Yūsufzay—with Aḥmad Shāh's personal epithet Durr-i Durrān.²²⁹ The meaning of the name Bar-Durrānī is unclear but was applied mainly to the

²²⁸ Maḥmūd al-Mūsawī, *Aḥwāl-i aqwām-i chahārgāna-i Afghān*, fol. 43a.

²²⁹ While Maḥmūd al-Mūsawī refers to the Yūsufzay as a distinct tribe, it is possible that he refers specifically to those members of the Yūsufzay confederacy who remained outside the authority of the Durrānī state.

Durrānī-allied Afghan tribes of India, who were generally known as Rohillas based on their habitation in Rōh.²³⁰ Maḥmūd al-Mūsawī states that while the Abdālī-Durrānī considered themselves as one of the Iranian tribes (*kh^wud rā az īyālāt-i Īrānī mīdānand*), they applied the term Bar-Durrānī “to the Afghans of India” (*Afghān-i Hindūstānī*). Scholars like Ghani and Gommans, among others, infer that the *Bar* in Bar-Durrānī derives from the Persian *bar* meaning “up” or “above” or “height”; they therefore interpret Bar-Durrānī to mean “upper/mountain” Durrānī in reference to the various “eastern tribes” dwelling in the highlands of northwest India.²³¹ Wakīlī Pōpalza’ī, on the other hand, suggests this *Bar* is a contraction of the Persian *barādar* or “brother”; he thus interprets Bar-Durrānī to mean “brothers of the Durrānī.”²³² Wakīlī Pōpalza’ī’s postulation seems plausible since “Bar-Durrānī” may reflect the fraternal relations that Aḥmad Shāh and his successors sought to establish with the Rohillas and other Pashtun groups inhabiting northwest India.²³³

Elphinstone, who was active around the same time as Maḥmūd al-Mūsawī and familiar with the tribes, refers to the Yūsufzay as one of the Bar-Durrānī or “eastern” tribes who were given their new name by Aḥmad Shāh; see Elphinstone, *An Account of the Kingdom of Caubul*, 324–26.

²³⁰ Concerning the geographic extent of Rōh, various Indian and Indo-Afghan sources suggest it spanned from Ḥasan Abdāl (Punjab) in the east and Kabul and Qandahar in the west while also encompassing Swat-Bajaur as well as the lands southward to Bhakkar. For the sources in question, see Gommans, *The Rise of the Indo-Afghan Empire*, 9–10n. To the list of references given by Gommans may be added: Muḥammad Mustajāb, *Gulistān-i Raḥmat*, fols. 6a–7a. For the idea of Rōh as deriving etymologically from the Sanskrit word “Rohitagiri” meaning “red hill,” see Hussain Khan, “The Genesis of Roh (The Medieval Homeland of the Afghans),” *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Pakistan* 15, no. 3 (1970): 191–97.

²³¹ Ghani, “Production and Domination,” 339; Gommans, *The Rise of the Indo-Afghan Empire*, 170n33. As Gommans notes, Maḥmūd al-Mūsawī categorized the Afghan tribes based on their geographic location. Thus, the Bar-Durrānī, who the author groups into twenty-nine tribes (*qawm*), consisted mainly of the prominent Pashtun groups—excepting the Durrānī, Ghilzay, and Yūsufzay—who resided in the mountainous region of northwest India, colloquially referred to as “Rōh,” and who fell within the Rohilla (*Rōhila*) category. See Maḥmūd al-Mūsawī, *Aḥwāl-i aqwām-i chahārgāna-i Afghān*, fols. 32b–43a. N.b., Fredrik Barth notes that in some villages in Swat contain “upper” (*bar*) and “lower” (*kuz*) wards; see Barth, *Political Leadership among the Swat Pathans*, 13–14.

²³² See Wakīlī Pōpalza’ī, “Intiqād bar maqāla-i ‘Abdālī, Sadōzā’ī wa Durrānī,” 228.

²³³ On the close fraternal and political relations between the Durrānī and Rohillas, see Gommans, *The Rise of the Indo-Afghan Empire*, 60–61. A similar phenomenon existed among the Sikhs who formed “*biradari*” networks in

In addition to establishing closer ties with the “eastern tribes” by categorizing them as “Bar-Durrānī,” Aḥmad Shāh altered the clan structure of the Durrānī tribal confederacy in various ways. For example, he decided to recognize the Achakzay, originally a sub-clan of the Bārakzay, as an independent clan in order to lessen the numbers and influence of the Bārakzay.²³⁴ There is evidence that he also incorporated non-Afghan tribes into the Durrānī confederacy. This development is noteworthy since it is often assumed that Aḥmad Shāh applied the term “Durrānī” only to the tribesmen of the formerly Abdālī *ulūs*. This assumption is in part based on the theory, perpetuated by local genealogical histories, that membership in an Afghan tribe was based on descent from a common ancestor. However, in conformity with the concept of charismatic rule, Aḥmad Shāh seems to have allowed for the inclusion of traditionally non-Abdālī elements into the Durrānī tribal structure as a means of diluting the power of his tribal followers. This would explain why Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī indicates that the title Durrānī was applied to those “who loyally rendered services alongside his victorious stirrup.”²³⁵ In other words, while the name “Durrānī” was applied to tribesmen formerly identified as Abdālī, affiliation with the Durrānī confederacy was not predicated merely on lineage but also on personal service and loyalty to Aḥmad Shāh.

The *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī* refers to instances of traditionally non-Abdālī, and even non-Afghan figures, having been granted the title “Durrānī.” An example is Aḥmad Khān, an Urūmī-Bayāt chief active in the Nīshapūr region who supported the Durrānī invasions of Khurasan in 1163/1750 and 1167/1754–55 and whom Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī refers to as

which families often formed kinship ties with neighbouring clans; see Purnima Dhavan, *When Sparrows Became Hawks: The Making of the Sikh Warrior Tradition, 1699–1799* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 103–8.

²³⁴ Elphinstone, *An Account of the Kingdom of Caubul*, 398–99; Adamec, *Historical and Political Gazetteer of Afghanistan*, 5:16; Anderson, “Doing Pakhtu,” 56; Ghani, “Production and Domination,” 344.

²³⁵ Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, ed. Murādōf, 1:11b–12a.

“Durrānī,” suggesting he was awarded the title for his loyal support of Aḥmad Shāh.²³⁶ A more telling example is that of the Za‘farānlū Kurds of Khurasan.²³⁷ Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī recounts how during the aforesaid Durrānī campaigns in 1167/1754–55, the Za‘farānlū chief Ja‘far Khān Kurd appeared before Aḥmad Shāh to offer his submission and “in accordance with Ja‘far Khān’s request, the entire Za‘farānlū tribe was rewarded with the distinguished title ‘Durrānī-Bāmīzay’ (*ḥasb al-istid‘ā-yi Ja‘far Khān tamāmī-i īl-i Za‘farānlū bi-khiṭāb-i mustaṭāb-i Durrānī-i Bāmīzay sharaḥ-i ikhtiṣāṣ yāfta*).” Ja‘far Khān later returned to his native Khabūshān and summoned fellow Kurdish khans to appear before Aḥmad Shāh and enter his service, in return for which they could expect lavish rewards. The aforesaid khans made their way to the Durrānī court to pledge their allegiance and even submitted written contracts to the effect that they would remain loyal to Aḥmad Shāh. In this way, many Za‘farānlū Kurds attached themselves to his service.²³⁸

The application of the title “Durrānī-Bāmīzay” to the Za‘farānlūs indicates that the latter served in a Bāmīzay-led regiment of the army. One may surmise that Aḥmad Shāh employed these Za‘farānlūs to balance the influence of the Bāmīzay who monopolized many of the key military and administrative offices of the state and were likely perceived as a potential threat to his own power. As already noted, Shāh Walī Khān exercised a great deal

²³⁶ Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, ed. Murādōf, 1:256b.

²³⁷ On the Kurds of Khurasan, see Wladimir Ivanow, “Notes on the Ethnology of Khurasan,” *Geographical Journal* 67, no. 2 (1926): 150–53; *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., s.v. “Īlāt” (by A.K.S. Lambton); *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. “Khorasan i. Ethnic Groups” (by Pierre Oberling); Īraj Afshār, *Muqaddima-i bar shinākht: Īl-hā, chādarnishīnān wa ṭawāyif-i ‘ashāyir-i Īrān*, 2 vols. (Tehran, 1366 H.sh./1987), 2:984–1007; Shohei Komaki, “Khorasan in the Early 19th Century,” *Journal of Sophia Asian Studies* 13 (1995): 84–85; ‘Abbas-‘Ali Madih, “Kurds of Khurasan,” *Iran and the Caucasus* 11 (2007): 11–31.

²³⁸ Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, ed. Murādōf, 1:230b–31b. Later sources also recount how Amr Singh, a Sikh *amīr* loyal to the Durrānī and a close associate of Shāh Walī Khān, was also awarded the title “Bāmīzay.” See ‘Abd al-Karīm ‘Alawī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad*, fac. ed., 17; Sulṭān Muḥammad, *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī*, 146; Fayḏ Muḥammad, *The History of Afghanistan*, 1:41.

of influence in political affairs and allegedly even aspired to rule. Aḥmad Shāh quite possibly anticipated this development and incorporated non-Abdālī tribesmen into the Durrānī clan structure as a preemptive measure to nip the growing influence of the Bāmīzay and other powerful Durrānī clans in the bud. Such efforts to reconfigure the Durrānī confederacy were intended to ensure that its members would profess and demonstrate loyalty to him directly as their paramount ruler rather than to their chiefs and leaders of their own clans.

In conclusion, the examples of Aḥmad Khān Bayāt and the Za‘farānlū Kurds indicate that the label Durrānī was not strictly applied to members of the Abdālī confederacy but also to non-Abdālī tribesmen whom Aḥmad Shāh incorporated into the Durrānī tribal structure, thus complicating the simple Durrānī=Abdālī equation. These examples also show that lineage was not the sole determining factor for affiliation with the Durrānī *ulūs*, as loyal services rendered to the paramount ruler played a considerable role. The incorporation of non-Afghan ethnic elements also supports the theory postulated earlier in this thesis that tribal structures among the Afghans were more fluid and absorbent than is often acknowledged. The growing diversity of the Durrānī confederacy supports the assessment of scholars like Rudi Lindner that nomadic tribes in pre-modern contexts often represented political formations and were not necessarily genealogically related even if they subscribed to an ideology of common descent.²³⁹

The Durrānī in Transition

Prior to the formation of the Durrānī polity, the Abdālī were not known to have engaged in agricultural activity but were primarily pastoralists with some also engaging in the overland trade linking Khurasan and India. During the period of Abdālī rule in Herat (1128–44/1716–32), the tribe began to occupy pastures in and around Khurasan and

²³⁹ Lindner, “What Was a Nomadic Tribe?” 696–98 *passim*.

periodically organized raids further west into the province.²⁴⁰ After conquering Herat in 1144/1732, Nādir Shāh relocated many Abdālī families to different parts of Khurasan. While roughly 6,000 Abdālī soldiers in the Nādirid military were awarded *tiyūls* or tax-free land grants in Qandahar after the conquest of the city in 1150/1738, various sources indicate that the bulk of the tribe retained its nomadic character. For instance, writing in the mid-eighteenth century, Jonas Hanway described the Abdālī of his time as “a wandering nation.”²⁴¹ This assertion is further corroborated by the Abdālī genealogical histories. In the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī*, as an example, we find references to the Abdālī of the pre-Durrānī era as a “steppe-dwelling peoples” (*mardum ṣaḥrā-nishīn*).²⁴² Another example is an anecdote from the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ʿālī-shān* relates that while visiting the graves of his relatives Asad Allāh and ʿAbd Allāh in Herat, Aḥmad Shāh said to one of his aides: “Were it not for these two lions, all Abdālī would still be shepherding in the mountains.”²⁴³ Though apocryphal, the anecdote does point to the nomadic background of the Abdālī. The above-quoted passage from the *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī* on Aḥmad Shāh’s ancestry also confirms that the Durrānī had “since ancient times” nomadized in the territory from Zamīndāwar in the west to Kabul in the east and the highlands to the south.

As the head of a polity of nomadic origins, Aḥmad Shāh initially relied on a booty economy. After Nādir Shāh’s assassination, Aḥmad Shāh and his Abdālī supporters captured funds destined for the Nādirid treasury in Kalāt on their way to Qandahar. As Aḥmad Shāh

²⁴⁰ Abbasi, “Report of Dread,” 11–32. One may presume that the Abdālī chief Mūsā Khān earned his moniker “Dūngī,” which is supposed, according to Tate, to mean “freebooter,” in the course of such raids; see Tate, *Kingdom of Afghanistan*, 58. The term Dūngī, which is also spelled variously as d.ā.n.g.ī and d.ā.n.k.ī (cf. Mahdī Khān and Muḥammad Kāẓim), may be related to the Persian verb *dūnak*, i.e., “to take” or “to seize,” or, alternatively, to the noun *dūng*, i.e., “crazy” or “senseless.” See Dihkhudā, *Lughat-nāma*, 6:9136, 7:9924.

²⁴¹ Hanway, *An Historical Account of the British Trade over the Caspian Sea*, 2:123.

²⁴² *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī*, fol. 49a. The Persian phrase *ṣaḥrā-nishīn* is often used to refer to pastoral nomads.

²⁴³ ʿAlī Muḥammad Khān, *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ʿālī-shān*, fols. 88b–89a.

styled himself a conqueror and strove to construct a world-empire based on conquest, he used his nomadic followers to fuel invasions of Khurasan and India, which offered plenty of opportunities to acquire booty. While the promise of plunder was alluring for his nomadic followers, Aḥmad Shāh must have recognized that a booty economy had its limitations since it was predicated on perpetual conquest and thus not sustainable in the long term.²⁴⁴ In order to establish a more reliable source of revenues for his military supporters and thereby ensure their loyalty, he awarded his Durrānī *amīrs* land grants in Qandahar in exchange for military service. As the Durrānī *amīrs* induced their kinsmen to settle in and around the lands granted to them, the reign of Aḥmad Shāh witnessed an influx of Durrānī settlers who took up agriculture in Qandahar. The gradual sedentarization of the Durrānī in Qandahar is detailed in the report produced by the colonial-era author Henry C. Rawlinson who describes the land-holding patterns in the province using data “from the military register of Ahmad Shah’s Government.” As Rawlinson’s report was based on valuable primary source data that can no longer be accounted for, it is worth summarizing in detail.²⁴⁵

The report notes that in the opening decades of the eighteenth century, the fertile lands of Qandahar were cultivated by a mixed peasantry made up of Pārsīwāns, Hazāras, Kākars, Balūchīs, etc., with a small number of Afghans as proprietors of the land. During the period of Ghilzay rule in the province (i.e., 1121–50/1709–38), the proprietors remitted taxes at the same rate they had paid to the Safavid governors. Upon conquering Qandahar from the Ghilzay, Nādir converted the land to *khālīṣa* or “state land,” and “transferred the rights”

²⁴⁴ For more on the booty economy and its limitations see Subtelny, *Timurids in Transition*, 14–15.

²⁴⁵ Among the sources Rawlinson drew upon for his report was a land survey conducted by the Durrānī official Miḥrāb Khān; see Rawlinson, “Report on the Dooranee Tribes,” 511, 514–16. Without citing any source, Ghani asserts that these documents are now lost; see Ghani, “Production and Domination,” 334.

of the peasantry to his “Durani” (read: Abdālī) soldiery, numbering roughly 6,000 men.²⁴⁶ As the Pārsīwān peasantry feared being “sold into slavery” to the Abdālī, Nādir assigned a portion of the *khālīṣa* in every village to the old proprietors and thereby ensured this land would remain subject to government assessment and free of Abdālī interference.²⁴⁷

Since at least the Safavid period, the lands of Qandahar were divided into *kulbas*, or ploughs, each cultivated by one *buzgar*, or husbandman, a yoke of oxen, and a plow. Nādir assigned the equivalent of 6,000 ploughs to the Abdālī-Durrānī soldiers—calculated at approximately one plough per horseman—as *tiyūls*, or tax-free land grants, in exchange for military service.²⁴⁸ The same policy was continued into the Durrānī period with the main exception being that while the *tiyūl*-holders under Nādir were required to retain the services of the native Pārsīwān peasants, over the course of Aḥmad Shāh’s reign the Durrānī khans or chiefs, along with their kinsmen, took up agricultural management of the lands while also expanding their land holdings throughout the province.²⁴⁹

²⁴⁶ Note that Rawlinson’s report, being based as it was on early Durrānī sources from the reign of Aḥmad Shāh at which time the use of the old name “Abdālī” was prohibited, refers to the Abdālī as “Durani” throughout.

²⁴⁷ Rawlinson, “Report on the Dooranee Tribes,” 509.

²⁴⁸ Under Nādir Shāh, the *tiyūl* grants were divided into 3,000 *kulba-i pukhta* or so-called “double-*kulbas*”, which produced double the agricultural output and were thus the equivalent of 6,000 single *kulbas*. Under Aḥmad Shāh, the *kulba-i pukhta* were divided into single *kulbas*, thus raising their number to 6,000 (with one *kulba* granted as *tiyūl* to each horseman); see Rawlinson, “Report on the Dooranee Tribes,” 509–11. According to Leech, the *kulba-i pukhta* in place under Nādir Shāh were called *arbābī* and each consisted of 100 *ṭanābs*, with a *ṭanāb* amounting to roughly 60 square yards; see Leech, “An Account of the Early Abdalees,” 469n. Based on this information, each single *kulba* presumably amounted to approximately 50 *ṭanābs* or 3,000 square yards.

²⁴⁹ Elphinstone, *An Account of the Kingdom of Caubul*, 530; Rawlinson, “Report on the Dooranee Tribes,” 511, 513–16; Gommans, “Indian Warfare and Afghan Innovation,” 273–74. In addition to tax concessions for their *tiyūls*, Durrānī soldiers also received annual salaries. Rawlinson indicates that the salaries of the Durrānī khans or chiefs ranged between 100 and 1,000 *tūmāns*, depending on rank, while the salary of a Durrānī horseman (i.e., non-chiefly) was fixed at 25 *tūmāns*. According to Rawlinson’s calculations, one *tūmān* was the equivalent of roughly 11 Company rupees.

According to Rawlinson's estimates, the lands worked by the native peasantry, which were called *ra'īyyatī*, amounted in quantity to roughly one third of the *tiyūls* that Nādir Shāh had awarded to the Abdālī-Durrānī chiefs;²⁵⁰ in total value, the *ra'īyyatī* lands amounted to roughly half that of the *tiyūl* lands. There was also a "considerable portion" of land in the valleys around Qandahar city—namely, those located in the vicinity of the Kadanī, Dōrī, Arghastān, and Tarnak rivers—that fell under a third category (i.e., neither *tiyūl* nor *ra'īyyatī*) called *khushk-āba*, meaning "dry lands" on account of their uncertain supplies of water for irrigation. The *khushk-āba* lands, which were not tied to military service and taxed modestly at a rate of one-tenth of their produce, had been assigned to Abdālī-Durrānī who regarded the *tiyūl* grants as "too limited for their numbers." In Nādir Shāh's reign, the *khushk-āba* had been only sparsely settled by the Abdālī-Durrānī, but over Aḥmad Shāh's reign "the tribes spread themselves over these valleys almost to the exclusion of the native peasantry."²⁵¹

Aḥmad Shāh maintained the Nādirid-era quota of roughly 6,000 Durrānī soldiers in his army, with each being assigned the equivalent of one plough as *tiyūl* grants. However, modifications were made to the land-holding arrangements; among the most important, the *khushk-āba* lands held by the Durrānī around Qandahar were converted to *mawrūsī* or "hereditary" lands. This modification was based on the alleged historical ties of the Durrānī to these lands, since their ancestors had descended from their ancient homeland of Kasēghar to aid the Ghilzay in expelling the Safavids.²⁵² In lieu of the tax-rate of one-tenth of their produce, the *khushk-āba* lands were assessed at relatively small amounts of wheat, barley, or chaff to be supplied on occasions when the Durrānī army passed through them

²⁵⁰ As Anderson notes, among the Durrānī of Qandahar the title "khan" designates a landowner; see Anderson, "Doing Pakhtu," 200; Anderson, "Khan and Khel," 133.

²⁵¹ Rawlinson, "Report on the Dooranee Tribes," 509–11.

²⁵² This claim is contradicted by the above-mentioned tradition (see §3.4) outlined in the *TMA* according to which the settlement of the Abdālī in Qandahar dated back to the reign of Shāhrukh b. Tīmūr.

during campaigns. On account of their relatively “light obligation,” many additional *khushk-āba* lands had been settled by the Durrānī; the Tarnak valley was occupied by the Alakōzay; the Arghastān valley by the Bārakzay and Pōpalzay; the Kadanī and Dōrī valleys by the Achakzay and Nūrzay; and little land remained for the native peasantry. This arrangement remained in place at the time Rawlinson’s report was produced in ca. 1841.²⁵³

Concerning the sedentarization of the Durrānī, the report adds that at the onset of Aḥmad Shāh’s reign the Durrānī maintained “the same pastoral habits that had been natural to them in the former conditions of shepherds, and ignorant of husbandry.” Upon being awarded *tiyūls* in and around Qandahar, the Durrānī chiefs were initially content to have the native peasantry work the lands for them. But the *tiyūl*-holders gradually “formed camps and villages of their own people...[p]urchased the implements of husbandry, and took the agricultural management of the lands into their own hands.” Over time the Durrānī *tiyūl*-holders and their kinsmen thus extended control over the productive lands “reserved for the peasantry.” As Aḥmad Shāh granted the Durrānī chiefs relative autonomy over their holdings, they taxed the native peasantry (*ra‘iyyat*) freely and induced many to abandon the land or sell it at a low price. The chiefs also had the lands worked by peasants from their own tribe and protected the latter from state interference. Through these means, over half of the *ra‘iyyatī* lands was transferred to Durrānī control.²⁵⁴ The Durrānī chiefs also followed the example of certain Pārsīwān “men of wealth and enterprise” by digging irrigation channels (*kārīz*) to provide water to barren lands; many of these newly cultivated lands (*nawābād*) of Qandahar were then transferred to the possession of their clansmen. The extent to which the Durrānī generally “turned from a pastoral to an agricultural life” is,

²⁵³ Rawlinson, “Report on the Dooranee Tribes,” 511–13.

²⁵⁴ Rawlinson, “Report on the Dooranee Tribes,” 510, 515–16.

according to Rawlinson's report, reflected in the condition of the crown lands (*khālīṣajāt*): at the time of Aḥmad Shāh's accession, the crown lands had been cultivated exclusively by the native peasantry; but during his reign, roughly three quarters had been transferred to the management of the Durrānī chiefs who taxed these lands at the high rate of one-third or one-half of their produce. In this way, by the time of Aḥmad Shāh's death, the Durrānī had settled most of the arable lands of Qandahar and attained newfound wealth and power. On the other hand, the Pārsīwān and other peasantry were relegated to performing manual labour for the Durrānī landowners and left with just enough on which to subsist.²⁵⁵

Rawlinson's report demonstrates that the sedentarization of the Abdālī-Durrānī in Qandahar was an ongoing process that began in the reign of Nādir Shāh and continued in earnest under Aḥmad Shāh.²⁵⁶ While the report focuses mainly on the sedentarization process of the Durrānī, it implies that Aḥmad Shāh initiated a broader effort to bolster agricultural production in Qandahar. This is not surprising since the nascent polity he founded required a regular source of revenues for mounting expenditures, especially for his

²⁵⁵ The sensitivity to the conditions of the Pārsīwān peasantry reflects the fact the records on which Rawlinson based his report were produced by those sympathetic to their cause. Rawlinson presents the tensions between the Durrānī Pashtuns and the local Pārsīwān peasantry as a cause for their reversed fortunes. He notes that many of the Durrānī who resented their years of degradation as slaves of Nādir Shāh took their displeasure out on the peasantry. "The [Durrānī] lived in an easy independence, surrounded by comforts of which they now, for the first time, learnt the value, while the [Pārsīwāns] dragged out a painful life of servitude, subjected to hardships more difficult to be endured, as they had been formerly but little used to them." See Rawlinson, "Report on the Dooranee Tribes," 512, 515–16.

²⁵⁶ While Rawlinson's report suggests that a large proportion of Abdālī-Durrānī became settled and took up agriculture, the tribe's sedentarization seems to have been a gradual process and was never fully completed, as certain Durrānī retained their nomadic lifestyle, some even to the present; for examples see Elphinstone, *An Account of the Kingdom of Caubul*, 409–11; Bernt Glatzer, "Political Organisation of Pashtun Nomads and the State," in *The Conflict of Tribe and State in Iran and Afghanistan*, ed. Richard Tapper (London: Croom Helm, 1983), 212–32; Nancy Tapper, "The Advent of Pashtūn 'Māldārs' in North-Western Afghanistan," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 36, no. 1 (1973): 62–63, 75; *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. "Dorrānī" (Daniel Balland); *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. "Eshāqzī" (Daniel Balland); Noelle, *State and Tribe*, 136–37.

growing military which as noted above included a professional corps of slave-soldiers and other non-Durrānī groups. Indeed, Aḥmad Shāh and his advisors would have been familiar with the adage found in Persian mirrors for princes, “No kingship without an army and no army without revenues.” Moreover, since agriculture was the main source of revenue for practically all pre-modern states in the Middle East, Aḥmad Shāh naturally endeavored to create a sedentary state based on revenues generated from agricultural lands.²⁵⁷

That Aḥmad Shāh actively sought to bolster the agrarian economy of Qandahar province may be detected in the *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*’s account of the construction of the new Durrānī capital of Aḥmadshāhī—that is, the city known today as Qandahar, which ought to be distinguished from the now desolate city of Old Qandahar.²⁵⁸ In his account Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī notes that Nādirābād, the capital that Nādir Shāh established in 1150/1737–38, served as the centre of the Durrānī state for nearly a decade after Aḥmad Shāh’s accession. However, as the site was prone to flooding that often resulted in infrastructural damage, Aḥmad Shāh decided to build a new capital to the north in the village of Dih-i Khwāja near the Pāyāb river.²⁵⁹ Beginning on 1 Rabīʿ II 1169/3 January 1756, his chief *amīrs*—especially Barkhurdār Khān and his relatives—oversaw the construction of the new city, which was given the name Ashraf al-bilād Aḥmadshāhī or “the most noble of cities Aḥmadshāhī.”²⁶⁰ Part of the project entailed constructing a large feeder canal (*nahr*) into the city from the

²⁵⁷ Subtelny, *Timurids in Transition*, 36–39. In terms of its basic features, the agrarian system of Qandahar under Nādir Shāh and Aḥmad Shāh bears resemblances to the *çift-hane* system of the Ottoman empire. For details on the *çift-hane* system, see Halil İnalcık, “The *çift-hane* System: The Organization of Ottoman Rural Society,” in *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, 1300–1914*, ed. Halil İnalcık with Donald Quataert (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 143–54.

²⁵⁸ On the site of Old Qandahar, see Lockhart, *Nadir Shah*, 112–21; and Fischer, “Zur Lage von Kandahar,” 144–53.

²⁵⁹ The Patāb canal in present-day Qandahar possibly takes its name from the Pāyāb river mentioned in the *TASH*; see Adamec, *Historical and Political Gazetteer of Afghanistan*, 5:132, 5:382.

²⁶⁰ The year of construction of Aḥmadshāhī is given in various studies as 1761. However, as Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī’s account indicates, the city’s date of construction should be placed at the beginning of 1169/1756.

Pāyāb river which itself issued from the Arghandāb. This reliable water source was used to irrigate lands that had previously been non-arable (*ghayr mazrūʿa*) to the delight of the local population including its peasantry (*dahāqīn*).²⁶¹

The decision to transfer the Durrānī capital from Nādirābād to the better-irrigated lands on the banks of the Arghandāb seems to have been part of an effort on Aḥmad Shāh's part to promote agricultural development in Qandahar. Likewise, his policies in north India reflect a growing reliance on revenues derived from agricultural lands. The *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī* emphasizes that the initial Durrānī invasions of India in 1160–61/1747–48 and 1161/1748–49 had been carried out to assert Aḥmad Shāh's authority over the agriculturally rich province of Punjab. Specifically, Aḥmad Shāh demanded payment of revenues from the Chahār Mahāl or “Four Districts” of Lahore province—that is, Siyālkōt, Gujrāt, Awrangābād, and Pasrūr—that had previously been remitted to the Nādirid treasury.²⁶² The later invasions in 1165/1751–52 and 1170/1756–57 were launched to protect Durrānī interests in these lands against rival powers like the Marathas who sought to assert their authority in the name of the Mughals. After ratifying the Nādirid “arrangement” (*dastūr*) in 1170/1757 and securing authority over Lahore, Multan, Kashmir and Sirhind, Aḥmad Shāh installed his son Tīmūr Shāh in Lahore as governor of the Punjab. However, a Maratha-led force drove Tīmūr Shāh out of the city in 1171/1758, thus precipitating Aḥmad Shāh's subsequent invasion of India that culminated in the famous Battle of Panipat (1174/1761). Aḥmad Shāh scored an impressive victory over the Marathas but was compelled to invade India on many more occasions to assert Durrānī hegemony in the face of the threat of the Khalsa Sikhs.

²⁶¹ Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, ed. Murādōf, 1:267a–72b.

²⁶² Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, ed. Murādōf, 1:60b, 1:64a–64b; Ghulām ʿAlī Āzād, *Khizāna-i ʿāmirā*, ed. Nīkūbakht and Bēg, 129. The revenues of the Chahār Mahāl amounted to between 14 (Singh) and 20 (Sarkar) lakhs of rupees; see Singh, *Ahmad Shah Durrani*, 76–78; Sarkar, “Ahmad Shah Abdali in India, 1748,” 214.

Table 2. Revenues of the Durrānī Provinces

Provinces	Revenues (in rupees ²⁶³)
Kashmir, Muẓaffarābād, et al.	2,400,000
Jalālābād	400,000
Kabul	500,000
Qandahar	200,000
Shikārpūr	900,000
Multan	600,000
Sind	1,000,000
Dēra Ismāʿīl Khān	1,400,000
Dēra Qāẓī Khān [a.k.a. Dēra Ghāẓī Khān]	1,600,000
Peshawar	600,000
Herat	300,000
But-i Bāmīyān and Hazārajāt	100,000
Charkh-i Lōgar, Nabakshī (?), et al.	200,000
Balūchistān	200,000
Khayrpūr, Khālpūr, etc.	600,000
Yūsufzaʿī districts [i.e., Swat, Bajaur, etc.]	200,000
Attock, Pind Ḥalīm, et al.	100,000
Liya, Dakūtar, Pashūṭ and Lahore-pindī	400,000
Kūkarī	100,000
Chārīk-kār and districts of the Lōhānī	200,000
Total:	12,000,000+²⁶⁴

²⁶³ Concerning the revenues of the Durrānī realm, ‘Abd al-Karīm states: “Every jurisdiction in each province has a rate of tax revenue (*ijāra*) remitted to the royal treasury (*khizāna-i ‘āmira*) on an annual basis or used towards the salaries of the soldiery (*mawājib-i ‘askar*). The currency (*pāra*) of those lands is the rupee (*rūpiya*). Each rupee amounts to two *ghurūsh*. The calculation [of taxes] (*ḥisāb*) of those lands [is done in] lakhs. Each lakh is 100,000 rupees, or 200,000 *ghurūsh* according to the method of calculation used in Islāmbūl (Istanbul). Each lakh amounts to 400 *kīsas*, no less, no more.” See ‘Abd al-Karīm “Bukhārī,” *Histoire de l’Asie Centrale*, 1:4–5.

²⁶⁴ The author notes that several other districts with revenues of 10,000 or less are not included in his list.

Table 2 above, which lists the agricultural tax revenues (*ijāra*) generated in the Indian provinces of the Durrānī realm, as documented in ‘Abd al-Karīm’s history of Central Asia, offers an indication of the central importance of the agrarian economy to the Durrānī state. It should be noted that ‘Abd al-Karīm composed his work in 1233/1818, or nearly half a century after Aḥmad Shāh’s death, by which time his successors ruled over a smaller territory that would have generated less revenues than at the peak of Durrānī power.²⁶⁵ But as the financial data ‘Abd al-Karīm provides clearly indicates, the agriculturally rich provinces of north India—primarily the Punjab and Kashmir—generated the bulk of the Durrānī state’s tax revenues, considerably more than the “Khurasani” lands to the west.²⁶⁶ Judging from this financial data, a clear economic impetus emerges for the near annual Durrānī campaigns in India. Aḥmad Shāh doubtless also sought to ensure a steady flow of trade between Central Asia and India that passed through the Durrānī territories of Indo-Khurasan.²⁶⁷ More importantly, while authors like Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī were liable to depict

²⁶⁵ According to Alexander Dow, the revenues generated in the lands under Aḥmad Shāh’s authority amounted to three crores, or 30,000,000, rupees; see Dow, *The History of Hindostan*, new ed., 2:487; Yuri Gankovsky, “The Durrani Empire,” in *Afghanistan: Past and Present*, trans. Evgeni Khazanov (Moscow: USSR Academy of Sciences, 1981), 86. Based on several later sources, Gommans likewise estimates that at the peak of its territorial extent and power under Aḥmad Shāh, the Durrānī polity generated roughly between 20,000,000 and 30,000,000 rupees annually; see Gommans, “Indian Warfare and Afghan Innovation,” 269. Under Aḥmad Shāh’s successors, the revenues decreased considerably. Ghulām Sarwar notes that in the reign of Shāh Zamān, the amount of revenues remitted to the royal treasury amounted to 6,725,000 rupees. On the figures given by Ghulām Sarwar, in addition to the foregoing, also see Hari Ram Gupta, *Studies in Later Mughal History of the Panjab, 1707–1793* (Lahore: Minerva, 1944), 268.

²⁶⁶ It is not clear from which source(s) ‘Abd al-Karīm derived his data on the revenues of the Durrānī state. But it should be noted that the figure he gives for the revenues generated in Kashmir is identical to the amount Imām al-Dīn gives in the *HSh*; see Imām al-Dīn, *Ḥusayn Shāhī*, fols. 161b–63a; ‘Abd al-Ḥayy Ḥabībī, “Chand ṣafḥa az Tārīkh-i Ḥusayn Shāhī,” *Āryānā* 25, no. 4 (1346 H.sh./1967): 30–31; Fayz Muḥammad, *The History of Afghanistan*, 1:90–91. For further details on the revenues of the Durrānī realm, albeit based similarly on sources produced in the post-Aḥmad Shāh period, see Ghubār, *Aḥmad Shāh Bābā-yi Afghān*, 161–72; Noelle, *State and Tribe*, 268–69; and Gankovsky, “The Durrani Empire,” 85–96.

²⁶⁷ Gommans, “Indian Warfare and Afghan Innovation,” 270.

his wars as religiously inspired *jihāds* against non-believers, Aḥmad Shāh's efforts to form a stable government in the Punjab and Kashmir indicate that the financial benefits associated with controlling the agrarian economy of north India and its vast tax base was the primary motivation for the wars waged by the Durrānī and their local allies, such as the Rohillas or Bar-Durrānī, against the Marathas and Sikhs.²⁶⁸

The increased attention to extracting revenues from the provinces of north India and to developing the agrarian economy of the centre of the Durrānī realm went hand in hand with Aḥmad Shāh's establishment of a bureaucratic administration designed to manage the fisc of the sprawling Durrānī state. Singh's statement from many decades ago about the absence of administrative manuals dating back to Aḥmad Shāh's reign still rings true today: reliable data concerning his administration are sorely lacking.²⁶⁹ However, primary source documents like the records on which Rawlinson based his report, the *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī* by Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, and the writings of Mīrzā ʿAbd al-Hādī offer valuable clues about the structure of the early Durrānī administration.²⁷⁰

A close examination of these sources reveals that the Durrānī administration was organized along Weberian, patrimonial-bureaucratic lines in that it combined a patrimonial household state with an Irano-Islamic-type bureaucracy. The patrimonial-bureaucratic regime of the Durrānī bore close resemblance to pre-existing administrative structures of

²⁶⁸ For details on Durrānī-Rohilla relations, see Gommans, *The Rise of the Indo-Afghan Empire*, 59–61.

²⁶⁹ Ghubār and, closely following him, Singh draw information from various sources for their description of Aḥmad Shāh's administration; Ghubār, *Aḥmad Shāh Bābā-yi Afghān*, 110–60 passim; Singh, *Ahmad Shah Durrani*, 347–64. Many of their descriptions are reiterated by Suhāʿī; see ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd Suhāʿī, “Tashkīlāt-i darbār-i Aḥmad Shāh Bābā bi iṣṭilāḥāt-i imrūz,” *ʿIrḡān* 50 (1351 H.sh./1971): 83–93. While these works provide a basic sense of Aḥmad Shāh's administration, they overlook important primary sources like the *TASH* and are, in the main, based on secondary sources; hence the analyses they offer tend to be anachronistic.

²⁷⁰ The unpublished writings of Mīrzā ʿAbd al-Hādī are known mainly through the works of Wakīlī Pōpalzaʿī, who consulted them for several of his studies dedicated to Durrānī monarchs.

the Safavid and Nādirid states that governed those lands that became the core domains of Aḥmad Shāh's polity.²⁷¹ This is evident in its amalgamation of Turco-Mongolian military offices with the Irano-Islamic administrative system of the Dīwān. It should be noted that while the Durrānī administration was made up of military and civilian branches, no clear ethnic divisions are discernable between the two branches as in the Turk-Tajik dichotomy that is supposed to have characterized the early Timurid and Safavid states.²⁷² However, the Durrānī chiefs who made up Aḥmad Shāh's patrimonial household were generally appointed to the most senior posts of the military, which was modelled on the Turkic military organization of the Timurids, Safavids, Mughals and others, while their fellow clansmen formed the core of what was otherwise an ethnically heterogeneous army. Supplementing this Durrānī core were Qizilbash *amīrs* and soldiers, who had served in Nādir Shāh's army and whose military experience was coveted, as well as soldiers from various ethnic and tribal groups, including: members of the various confederate clans of the Durrānī *ulūs*; non-Durrānī Afghan-Pashtun tribes like the Ghilzay and Bar-Durrānī; and non-Pashtun groups such as the Uzbeks, Baluchis, Hazaras, etc.²⁷³

The Durrānī administration revolved around the Royal Dīwān (*dīwān-i a'ālā*), which represented Aḥmad Shāh's council of advisors who convened regularly to discuss affairs of

²⁷¹ In a study dedicated to the Mughals, Stephen Blake modified Weber's model of the patrimonial household state to include bureaucratic features influenced by Persian administrative traditions. This modified Weberian model has been used to analyze several pre-modern polities including, as noted, the Mughal empire; Stephen P. Blake, "The Patrimonial-Bureaucratic Empire of the Mughals," *Journal of Asian Studies* 39, no. 1 (1979): 77–94. More recently, it has also been used to study the Safavid and Timurid empires; see Matthee, *Persia in Crisis*, 1–3; Subtelny, *Timurids in Transition*, 1–15, 33–42, 229–34.

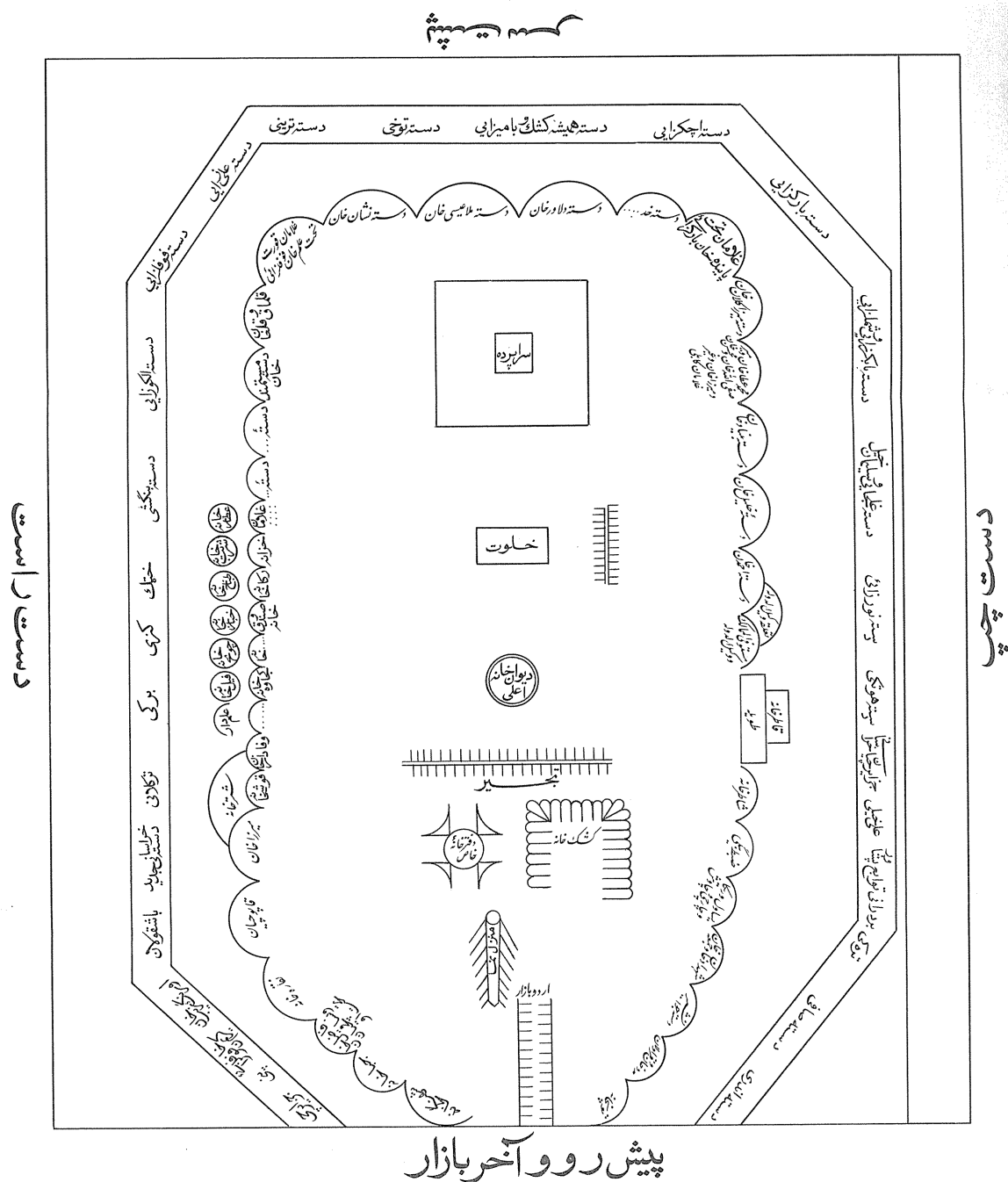
²⁷² Colin P. Mitchell, *The Practice of Politics in Safavid Iran: Power, Religion and Rhetoric* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2009), 49–50; Subtelny, *Timurids in Transition*, 67–72.

²⁷³ See the above section titled "The Durrānī Military Establishment" for further details on the array of ethnic elements in Aḥmad Shāh's army.

state.²⁷⁴ This council was centered on the Royal Dīwān Office (*dīwān-khāna-i a'ālā*) overseen by the Head of the Dīwān (*dīwān bēg*) and apparently based in the Durrānī capital, Aḥmadshāhī. The Royal Dīwān Office was the locus of various departments and interacted closely with the Royal Records Office (*daftar khāna-i a'ālā*) where comptrollers (*mustawfī*), clerks (*mutaṣaddī*), and other accountants gathered and produced documents of financial transactions. The Records Office would likely have been the site of the chancery bureau (*dār al-inshā'*) where scribes (*munshī*) of various ranks composed chancery documents (*munsha'āt*), such as diplomatic correspondences, royal decrees, diplomas, and edicts.²⁷⁵ Aḥmad Shāh's court was peripatetic and so scribes would have accompanied the ruler during his travels and produced documents on the go when necessary, hence the periodic references in the sources to the ruler's "private secretariat" (*inshā'-i ḥuẓūr*).

²⁷⁴ For relevant studies of the office of the Dīwān in Iranian history, see *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., s.v. "Dīwān, iv. Īrān" (by Ann K. S. Lambton); see *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. "Dīvān, ii. Government Office" (by C. Edmund Bosworth).

²⁷⁵ The chancery bureau (*dār al-inshā'*) of the Durrānī was known by different names. Ghubār, apparently based on later sources, refers to it as *dār al-tahrīr*; see Ghubār, *Aḥmad Shāh Bābā-yi Afghān*, 115–16, 119–20. Under Tīmūr Shāh, the chancery was also known as the *daftar-i inshā'*; see Wakīlī Pōpalza'ī, *Tīmūr Shāh Durrānī*, 2:378. For further details on the Durrānī chancery, see Nawid, "Historiography in the Sadduzai Era," 241–43.



پیش رو و آخر بازار

A reconstructed image of the layout of the Durrānī court (*urdū*), said to be based on a contemporary hand drawing. From Wakīlī Pōpalzaʿī, *Tīmūr Shāh Durrānī*, 1: facing p. 199; and Wakīlī Pōpalzaʿī, *Aḥmad Shāh*, facing p. 433. Although Wakīlī Pōpalzaʿī suggests the image is of the citadel (*qalʿa*) of Aḥmadshāhī (i.e., Qandahar city), as Farhang points out, the image is, in fact, of the Durrānī royal court (*urdūgāh*); see Farhang, *Afghānistān dar panj qarn-i akhīr*, 153–54.

The individual departments of the Royal Dīwān were overseen by leading *amīrs* of the patrimonial household who were native speakers of Pashto but also conversant in Persian. The most prominent of these *amīrs* was Shāh Walī Khān who, as already noted, served as head of the permanent bodyguard and as grand *wazīr*. In his capacity as grand *wazīr*, Shāh Walī Khān worked closely with the *dīwān bēg* ‘Abd Allāh Khān, a fellow Bāmīzay who oversaw the various departments of the Royal Dīwān.²⁷⁶ Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī notes that when Shāh Walī Khān was stripped of the *wazīrate*, he was prohibited from communicating with the Records Office, thus highlighting the grand *wazīr*’s hitherto close involvement in the affairs of the Royal Dīwān. Similarly, the Durrānī commander Khān Jahān Khān served as *wazīr* to Tīmūr Shāh when the latter was appointed governor of the Punjab, and would have performed similar functions to the grand *wazīr*, but for the provincial council of the crown prince. These Durrānī *amīrs* exercised close oversight over the administration of the Durrānī state for the bulk of Aḥmad Shāh’s reign.

As Aḥmad Shāh ruled over an extensive territory where Persian had for centuries been the official language of governance, the bureaucratic administration of the Durrānī was based on Irano-Islamic models and managed largely by Persian-speaking bureaucrats, many of whom were émigrés from Iran. This cadre of Iranian officials, who represented the prominent civilian element in the Durrānī government, worked in cooperation with the Durrānī *amīrs* overseeing the Royal Dīwān. Owing to a lack of data, the background of many remains murky but from the available sources it seems that a large number were experienced Nādirid-era officials from Iran who, needful of employment after Nādir Shāh’s death, entered the service of Aḥmad Shāh due to their competence in bureaucratic and

²⁷⁶ The function of the *dīwān bēg* under Aḥmad Shāh is not specified in the sources. According to Wakīlī Pōpalza’ī, the *dīwān bēg* served as Head of the Departments (*amīr-i dafātir*) at the Durrānī court; see Wakīlī Pōpalza’ī, *Tīmūr Shāh Durrānī*, 2:313–18.

financial affairs. Perhaps the best known of these officials is Taqī Khān Shīrāzī, whom Nādir Shāh had assigned to administer the formerly Mughal provinces of north India to ensure a steady flow of revenues from the region to the Nādirid treasury.²⁷⁷ On learning of Nādir's assassination, Taqī Khān pledged allegiance to Aḥmad Shāh and is said to have also induced fellow Nādirid-era officials to enter Durrānī service. As the head of the Iranian troops in the Durrānī army, Taqī Khān accompanied Aḥmad Shāh on many of his early conquests and helped to extend his authority over north India.²⁷⁸ He also facilitated the successful Durrānī conquest of Khurasan in 1167/1754-55, which precipitated further waves of migrations of Iranian officials, including the *munshī* Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī as well as many military personnel, to the Durrānī realms of Indo-Khurasan.

Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī periodically mentions fellow bureaucrats—often referred to by the official title *mīrzā*, which denoted their profession—in the Durrānī administration whom he refers to collectively in the *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī* as Masters of the Pen (*arbāb-i qalam*).²⁷⁹ This includes the Head Secretary (*munshī bāshī*) Sa‘ādat Khān; though little is known of his background, Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī describes Sa‘ādat Khān as one of the shah’s intimates (*muqarrab*) and he is credited with composing several diplomatic correspondences to the

²⁷⁷ Prior to his assignment to north India, Taqī Khān Shīrāzī served as “comptroller of the state” (*mustawfī al-mamālik*) and governor of Fars and Oman under Nādir Shāh; ‘Abd al-Karīm Kashmīrī, *Bayān-i wāqī‘*, 90; Āzar Bēgdilī, *Ātishkada-i Āzar*, 4:465–69; Gulistāna, *Mujmal al-tawārīkh*, ed. Mudarris-Raḥawī, 306.

²⁷⁸ During his initial campaign in India, Aḥmad Shāh was accompanied by Taqī Khān Shīrāzī who served as a commander of the Qizilbash contingent in the army; see Ghulām Ḥusayn Khān, *Siyar al-muta’akhhirīn*, 2:18; ‘Abd al-Karīm Kashmīrī, *Bayān-i wāqī‘*, 185–87, 210; Gulistāna, *Mujmal al-tawārīkh*, ed. Mudarris-Raḥawī, 79, 87–89; Ghulām ‘Alī Khān Naqawī, *Imād al-sa‘ādat*, 38; Sarkar, *Fall of the Mughal Empire*, 1:114, 1:126. Wakīlī Pōpalza’ī notes that in certain official documents Taqī Khān’s title appears beside his seal as *sarrishta-dār-i daftar-i ḥuẓūr* or “Record Keeper of the Private Financial Ledger”; e.g., see Wakīlī Pōpalza’ī, *Timūr Shāh Durrānī*, 2:368. He also surmises that the Shīrāzī quarter of the district of Chindawul in Kabul takes its name from the residence of Taqī Khān Shīrāzī and his associates; see Wakīlī Pōpalza’ī, *Aḥmad Shāh*, 400–1, 483.

²⁷⁹ Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, ed. Murādōf, 2:409a.

Mughals on behalf of Aḥmad Shāh.²⁸⁰ Another *munshī bāshī* was Mīrzā ‘Abd al-Hādī who wrote under the pen-name “Ishrat”; a native of Lār in western Iran and a sayyid of the Mūsawī line—i.e., claiming descent from the seventh Imam of Twelver Shi‘ism, Mūsā al-Kāẓim (d. 183/799)—‘Abd al-Hādī began his career in the service of Nādir Shāh as an apprentice of Mīrzā Mahdī Khān Astarābādī. Soon after Nādir Shāh’s assassination, he found employment in Aḥmad Shāh’s administration and served in the private secretariat (*inshā’-i ḥuẓūr*) of the shah and the crown prince Tīmūr Shāh. He was later appointed *munshī bāshī* and held this post until his death in Kabul during the reign of Tīmūr Shāh.²⁸¹

The writings of Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī and ‘Abd al-Hādī offer further details about the cadre of bureaucrats, especially those from different parts of Iran who entered the service of Aḥmad Shāh after Nādir Shāh’s death. They include: Mīrzā Muḥammad Hāshim “Bihishtī” ‘Arab-i Khuzayma, a native of Khurasan who served as a *munshī* under the *dīwān bēg*, ‘Abd Allāh Khān,²⁸² Mīrzā ‘Alī Rizā Khān, a native of Ishtihārd near Tehran who began his career as a *mutaṣaddī* but was later appointed *mustawfi*;²⁸³ Mīrzā ‘Alī Khān ‘Arab-i Khuzayma; Mīrzā

²⁸⁰ Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, ed. Murādōf, 1:270a.

²⁸¹ For more on Mīrzā ‘Abd al-Hādī and his descendants, who served as *munshī bāshīs* in the chancery of later Durrānī monarchs, see Imām al-Dīn, *Ḥusayn Shāhī*, fols. 153a–54b; Fayz Muḥammad, *The History of Afghanistan*, 1:89; Ghubār, *Aḥmad Shāh Bābā-yi Afghān*, 119–20; Ghubār, *Afghānistān dar masīr-i tārīkh*, 359; Wakīlī Pōpalza’ī, *Durrat al-Zamān*, 284–85; Wakīlī Pōpalza’ī, *Tīmūr Shāh Durrānī*, 1:1–2, 2:378, 2:480–81, 2:707–11; and Ḥusayn Barzigar, “Ishrat Lārī,” in Ḥasan Anūsha, ed., *Dānishnāma-i adab-i fārsī*, vol. 3, *Adab-i fārsī dar Afghānistān* (Tehran: Wizārat-i Farhang wa Irshād-i Islāmī, 1378 H.sh./1999), 696–97. Mīrzā ‘Abd al-Hādī is also briefly mentioned in Barnābādī’s *Tazkira* as a *munshī bāshī* under Tīmūr Shāh; see Muḥammad Rizā Barnābādī, *Tazkira*, 53b–54a; and Māyil Harawī, *Mīrzāyān-i Barnābād*, 53.

²⁸² See Wakīlī Pōpalza’ī, *Tīmūr Shāh Durrānī*, 1:1, 2:707; and [Ḥusayn Barzigar,] “Bihishtī,” in Ḥasan Anūsha, ed., *Dānishnāma-i adab-i fārsī*, vol. 3, *Adab-i fārsī dar Afghānistān* (Tehran: Wizārat-i Farhang wa Irshād-i Islāmī, 1378 H.sh./1999), 187.

²⁸³ Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, ed. Murādōf, 1:263b. This appears to be the same Mīrzā ‘Alī Rizā “Mūsawī” described in the writings of Mīrzā ‘Abd al-Hādī; see Wakīlī Pōpalza’ī, *Tīmūr Shāh Durrānī*, 2:707. This Mīrzā ‘Alī Rizā Khān Mūsawī continued to serve as comptroller in the reign of Tīmūr Shāh; see Fayz

Shukr Allāh Qūrt;²⁸⁴ Mīrzā ʿAbd Allāh Maftūn, and several others. These are representative examples of the growing number of *mustawfīs*, *munshīs*, and other *mīrzās* or professional bureaucrats, employed in the Durrānī administration.

Our rudimentary understanding of the early Durrānī bureaucracy might improve with the possible future discovery of documents dating from Aḥmad Shāh's reign. But a close reading of the available sources reveals that the early Durrānī administration was modeled after its Safavid and Nādirid antecedents and managed by Iranian bureaucrats with experience serving in the Nādirid administration. The adoption of this Irano-Islamic model of governance was not simply a matter of convenience but a necessary step towards meeting the exigencies of ruling over a largely sedentary society—whether the population of Qandahar, which witnessed an increasing amount of Durrānī settlements, or inhabitants of the agriculturally rich lands of north India that generated the bulk of the Durrānī polity's revenues. This more regularized source of revenues was crucial to meeting the expenditures of the Durrānī state, especially the burgeoning military on which Aḥmad Shāh depended to maintain and expand the reach of his bureaucracy.

6.6: Conclusions: Shortcomings of the Durrānī Imperial Project

The transition of the Durrānī from a confederacy of nomadic tribes to founders of a more centralized sedentary state was accompanied by tensions between Aḥmad Shāh and his tribal following that endured throughout his reign. Because his aspiration to rule over a world-empire was predicated on the military support of the Durrānī *amīrs*, Aḥmad Shāh

Muḥammad, *The History of Afghanistan*, 1:89; Ghubār, *Aḥmad Shāh Bābā-yi Afghān*, 117; May Schinasi, *Kabul: A History, 1773–1948*, trans. R. D. McChesney (Leiden: Brill, [2016]), 29, 33.

²⁸⁴ Wakīlī Pōpalzaʿī, *Tīmūr Shāh Durrānī*, 2:707. This appears to be the same Mīrzā Shukr Allāh Khān described in the *TASH* as a comptroller serving in the Records Office; see Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, ed. Murādōf, 1:263b.

strove to ensure their allegiance by appointing them to the most senior ranks in his military, granting them access to booty acquired in campaigns, and awarding them land grants (primarily in the Durrānī capital of Qandahar, but also in other parts of his realm).²⁸⁵ The Durrānī *amīrs* who supported Aḥmad Shāh's rise to power formed the core of his patrimonial household. But as is common among clan-based polities, Aḥmad Shāh's tribal support base was both a source of, and impediment to, his authority. Thus, while endeavoring to placate his Durrānī followers through the granting of special favours, he simultaneously enacted policies designed to curtail their influence. One policy was to suppress memory of the Abdālī past by inaugurating a new Durrānī ruling dispensation in which his followers professed loyalty only to him. Another policy was to establish a rationalized system of bureaucratic government that resulted in an ever-greater degree of "rigidness of financial detail" in the land assessments of the capital of Qandahar and, to be sure, the more distant provinces that came under the authority of the Durrānī state.²⁸⁶ In adopting an Irano-Islamic bureaucratic administration committed to his political goals while actively promoting the agrarian economy of his domains, Aḥmad Shāh endeavored to establish a stable flow of revenues into the Durrānī treasury. These revenues funded the royal slave corps and the professional standing army that would in turn be used not only to fuel conquests abroad but also to serve as a check against his increasingly powerful tribal support base locally. To legitimate his policies and offset any potential resistance to them, Aḥmad Shāh relied on a combination of Afghan and Irano-Islamic concepts of authority by asserting that his entitlement to rule was

²⁸⁵ Whether through land grants assigned directly by Aḥmad Shāh or lands purchased through their increased purchasing power in the course of his reign, various Durrānī *amīrs* came to possess considerable estates throughout the Durrānī domains. A noteworthy example are the extensive estates of the *dīwān bēg*, 'Abd Allāh Khān Bāmīzay, in Qandahar, Kabul, Jalālābād, Kashmir, and other parts of India under Durrānī authority; see Ghani, "Production and Domination," 116–18.

²⁸⁶ Rawlinson, "Report on the Dooranee Tribes," 511.

a birthright derived from his noble Afghan lineage but even more so a product of divine favour. In terms of its main governing apparatuses, the Durrānī polity that took shape during Aḥmad Shāh's rule bore resemblances to various patrimonial-bureaucratic regimes that preceded it, including those of the Safavids, Mughals, and especially Nādir Shāh.

Aḥmad Shāh's concern with limiting the influence of the Durrānī seems to have been justified considering that the tribe's leaders posed a challenge to his authority throughout his reign. We have already described the revolts of important Durrānī figures like: Muḥabbat Khān and his co-conspirators; Luqmān Khān, whose revolt was supported by, among others, the Durrānī official Bustān Khān Fōfalzay; and the grand *wazīr* Shāh Walī Khān. To this list of Durrānī discontents described in the *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī* may be added: Shafqat Khān Durrānī, who was accused of carrying out unspecified acts of treachery (*khiyānat-hā*) for which he was punished by Aḥmad Shāh and died soon after in 1161/1748–49;²⁸⁷ and Mīr Kh^wush Khān Durrānī who led a group of his supporters in a revolt that was put down near Qandahar by Prince Sulaymān in 1181/1767–68.²⁸⁸ Predictably, the chronicler Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī is quick to criticize these acts of insubordination yet he does not describe the nature of such grievances in any detail. A possible exception is the deposition of Shāh Walī Khān, who is alleged to have aspired to rule in place of Aḥmad Shāh; but even in this instance, the author's one-sided account of events is tinged with a clear bias in favour of his patron.

Among the local sources that describe the possible nature of the grievances is the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ʿālī-shān*, which notes that Aḥmad Shāh adopted an absolutist form of

²⁸⁷ Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī implies that Aḥmad Shāh intended to restore Shafqat Khān to his good graces but was prevented from doing so after the latter plunged into the Attock River of the Peshawar region; see Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, ed. Murādōf, 1:61a.

²⁸⁸ Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, ed. Murādōf, 2:593a–96a.

kingship while also relying ever more on non-Durrānī soldiers, thereby alienating many of the same Durrānī who had been responsible for bringing him to power.²⁸⁹ Though writing in the decades following Aḥmad Shāh's death, 'Alī Muḥammad Khān's statements about the causes for Durrānī resentment towards the ruler seem reasonable. For, despite claims to the contrary, there is no evidence that royalism existed among the Abdālī prior to Aḥmad Shāh's reign.²⁹⁰ Even during their brief time in power in Herat, the Abdālī appear to have practiced a form of corporate sovereignty in which their chiefs were considered first among equals and political power was more diffuse.²⁹¹ In contrast, the highly personalized and autocratic form of rule that Aḥmad Shāh adopted in the wake of Nādir Shāh's death gradually enhanced his own power while diminishing the influence of the Durrānī chieftains, hence their antipathy to him.²⁹²

If we are to accept the information presented in the later account of Leech, the Bārakzay were another group of Durrānī discontents. While Aḥmad Shāh relied on Bārakzay *amīrs* like 'Abd al-Raḥmān and Ḥājji Jamāl Khān for military support, on the whole the Bārakzay exercised proportionately less influence than members of his own clan, the Pōpalzay, and the clan of his mother, the Alakōzay. Rawlinson's report, for instance, suggests that the Pōpalzay and Alakōzay each received roughly the same amount of *tiyūl* grants as the Bārakzay despite the latter being greater in number. Leech's statement that

²⁸⁹ 'Alī Muḥammad Khān, *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i 'ālī-shān*, fols. 75b–76a.

²⁹⁰ For references to those Khudaka rulers of Herat who are alleged (without any substantiation) to have adopted the title of shah, see 'Alī Muḥammad Khān, *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i 'ālī-shān*, fols. 39a, 46b, 49b.

²⁹¹ The corporate nature of Abdālī rule in Herat closely resembles what Martin Dickson referred to, in his description of Uzbek political theory, as the “dynastic clan”; see Martin B. Dickson, “Uzbek Dynastic Theory in the Sixteenth Century,” in *Trudy dvadtsat' piatogo Mezhdunarodnogo kongressa vostokovedov, Moskva 1960*, vol. 3, *Zasedaniia seksii X, XI, XIII* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo vostochnoi literatury, 1963), 210. For more on the idea of corporate sovereignty, see Woods, *The Aqqayunlu*, 19–20; Subtelny, *Timurids in Transition*, 36–39.

²⁹² On the tensions arising from implementing royalism in egalitarian societies like that of the Afghans, see Elphinstone, *An Account of the Kingdom of Caubul*, 543–44; Hopkins, *The Making of Modern Afghanistan*, 102–5.

the Bārakzay resented the “high and dry” lands Aḥmad Shāh granted to them implies that their land was poorer in quality than that of other prominent Durrānī clans.²⁹³ The perceived disenchantment of the Bārakzay helps to explain their antagonistic attitude towards the Sadōzay ruling family throughout the first half of the nineteenth century.

Durrānī discontent was certainly a contributing factor to the disintegration of the Durrānī state within decades of Aḥmad Shāh’s passing. Another important factor was the fragmented nature of the appanage-like system that Aḥmad Shāh implemented in the years leading up to his death.²⁹⁴ Reminiscent of the appanage systems that characterized many Turkic and Turko-Mongol dynasties, Aḥmad Shāh apportioned parts of his realm among his male heirs.²⁹⁵ He appointed his eldest son, Tīmūr Shāh, ruler of Herat; his second son, Sulaymān, to govern Qandahar;²⁹⁶ and his younger sons, Parwīz and Sikandar, to govern Kabul and Peshawar, respectively.²⁹⁷ Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī periodically asserts in the *Tārīkh-i*

²⁹³ Leech, “An Account of the Early Abdalees,” 469; Elphinstone, *An Account of the Kingdom of Caubul*, 398.

²⁹⁴ After describing the sedentarization process of the Durrānī, Rawlinson adds that Aḥmad Shāh “appears to have hardly been aware of the danger” to which he was potentially subjecting his state by granting the tribes such great influence; he also suggests the Durrānī chiefs were too preoccupied with conquest and agricultural management that they had “neither the will nor the leisure to turn their thoughts to intrigues against the government”; he refers to two insurrections “which were speedily quelled” as being rare exceptions. But while Rawlinson provides valuable data about land-holding patterns in Qandahar, the conclusions he draws about Aḥmad Shāh’s apprehensions towards the new landowning Durrānī elite are questionable. He evidently did not consult the *TASH*, which indicates that the Durrānī were the source of unrest throughout Aḥmad Shāh’s reign. Moreover, the various measures he devised to curb the influence of the Durrānī chiefs suggest he was aware of the danger that his tribal subjects posed to his authority.

²⁹⁵ For a study on the Mongol practice of apportioning the lands among the heirs of Chinggis Khān, see Thomas T. Allsen, “Sharing Out the Empire: Apportioned Lands under the Mongols,” in *Nomads in the Sedentary World*, ed. Anatoly M. Khazanov and André Wink (London: Curzon, 2001), 172–90.

²⁹⁶ According to Ferrier and his followers, including Singh, Sulaymān was, in fact, Aḥmad Shāh’s eldest son. But this assertion, apparently derived from a manuscript of the later Durrānī-era history authored by ‘Abd Allāh Khān Harātī (see §2.2, note 17), is mistaken; Ferrier, *History of the Afghans*, 91–92; Singh, *Ahmad Shah Durrani*, 325–26.

²⁹⁷ According to Gulistāna, Aḥmad Shāh appointed Parwīz as governor of Kabul while Sikandar was to govern the Punjab; see Gulistāna, *Mujmal al-tawārīkh*, ed. Mudarris-Rāzawī, 120. This view seems plausible since prior to

Aḥmad Shāhī that during his lifetime Aḥmad Shāh declared Tīmūr Shāh as his heir-apparent. Assuming the accuracy of this assertion, it appears Aḥmad Shāh intended for the other Durrānī princes to manage affairs in their own appanages and for Tīmūr Shāh to follow in his own footsteps as their paramount ruler, or King of Kings.²⁹⁸ It is unclear whether Aḥmad Shāh felt that this appanage-like system would remain intact or if he recognized that it would not survive in the long term. In any event, immediately after his death the Durrānī chiefs took advantage of the inherently fragmented appanage system to pursue their own political agendas. The most significant example is that of the *wazīr* Shāh Walī Khān who, in the disorder that arose after Aḥmad Shāh's death, conspired with other Durrānī khans to have his son-in-law, Prince Sulaymān, accede to the throne in Qandahar in place of Tīmūr.²⁹⁹ When news of Sulaymān's accession reached Tīmūr, who was stationed in Herat at the time, the latter marched with his army to Qandahar where he ordered the capture of Sulaymān and the execution of his long-time nemesis, Shāh Walī Khān.³⁰⁰

his passing, Aḥmad Shāh dispatched Sikandar to the Peshawar region and Parwīz to Kabul; see Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, ed. Murādōf, 2:602a–3b, 2:622b–23a, 2:632a.

²⁹⁸ The *TASH* attributes Aḥmad Shāh the following seven sons: Tīmūr, Sulaymān, Sikandar, Dārāb, Parwīz, Sanjar, and Shihāb. ‘Abd al-Karīm attributes at least three more sons to the ruler: Maḥmūd, Gōhar, and Humāy; see ‘Abd al-Karīm “Bukhārī,” *Histoire de l’Asie Centrale*, 1:10. I have been able to locate in the sources a reference to only one of Aḥmad Shāh's daughters, Najm al-Sulṭān, whose mother is alleged to have been a non-Afghan; see ‘Alī Muḥammad Khān, *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shāh*, fol. 93a.

²⁹⁹ ‘Azīz al-Dīn Wakīlī Pōpalza’ī, *Tīmūr Shāh Durrānī* (Kabul: Maṭba‘a-i Dawlatī, 1332 H.sh./1954), 249–54. According to ‘Abd al-Karīm, Shāh Walī Khān even succeeded in convincing Aḥmad Shāh to recognize Sulaymān as his successor over Tīmūr; see ‘Abd al-Karīm “Bukhārī,” *Histoire de l’Asie Centrale*, 1:12. Aḥmad Shāh was greatly incapacitated towards the end of his life and it is possible that the *wazīr* somehow managed to secure Sulaymān's succession, though this is far from certain. Most sources agree that Aḥmad Shāh appointed his eldest son Tīmūr Shāh as his successor.

³⁰⁰ On the topic of Shāh Walī Khān's execution, see Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, ed. Murādōf, 2:640b; Siyālkōtī, *Shāhnāma-i Aḥmadī*, fols. 415b–16b; Imām al-Dīn, *Ḥusayn Shāhī*, fols. 64a–66a; Gulistāna, *Mujmal al-tawārīkh*, ed. Mudarris-Raḥawī, 121–23; Abū al-Ḥasan Qazwīnī, *Fawā'id al-ṣafawiyya*, 161–62; ‘Abd al-Karīm “Bukhārī,” *Histoire de l’Asie Centrale*, 1:10; Sulṭān Muḥammad, *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī*, 148; Fayz Muḥammad, *The History of Afghanistan*, 1:55–56. Ferrier, followed by Dupree, asserts that Prince Sulaymān fled to India, though, given

After eliminating this threat, Tīmūr Shāh asserted his authority and received the tacit submission of his subjects in Qandahar. But despite efforts to win their support, various Durrānī factions, including those that had backed the decision to elevate Sulaymān to power, challenged Tīmūr's authority. Tīmūr Shāh thus organized a military tribunal that resulted in the execution of several dissident Durrānī *amīrs*.³⁰¹ In response to these measures, Tīmūr Shāh was confronted with the revolt of his relative, 'Abd al-Khāliq b. Raḥmān Khān Sadōzay, who received the backing of Durrānī factions in Qandahar.³⁰² Although 'Abd al-Khāliq's revolt was speedily quelled, Durrānī factions continued to oppose Tīmūr's rule;³⁰³ this includes at least one later plot hatched by a group of Durrānī *amīrs* to

the unreliability of Ferrier's sources of information, this assertion is likely mistaken; see Ferrier, *History of the Afghans*, 97; Dupree, *Afghanistan*, 340. But it is much more likely, as 'Abd al-Karīm "Bukhārī" asserts, that Prince Sulaymān was confined at the Bālā Ḥiṣār citadel in Kabul, by Tīmūr Shāh and spent the rest of his life in prison; see 'Abd al-Karīm "Bukhārī," *Histoire de l'Asie Centrale*, 1:10, 1:12–13.

³⁰¹ For the military tribunal and execution of dissident Durrānī *amīrs*, see Fayz Muḥammad, *The History of Afghanistan*, 1:57–58.

³⁰² 'Abd al-Khāliq's father Raḥmān Khān, one of Aḥmad Shāh's intimate companions (*muqarrab*), belonged to the Kāmran Khēl Sadōzay lineage based in Multan. Raḥmān Khān served for a time as governor of Shikārpūr under Aḥmad Shāh and was presumably succeeded by 'Abd al-Khāliq after his passing; see Durrani, *Multan under the Afghans*, 83–84; Qāzī Nūr Muḥammad, *Qazi Nur Muhammad's Jang Namah: Giving an Account of the Seventh Invasion of Ahmed Shah Durrani*, ed. Ganda Singh (Amritsar: Khalsa College, 1939), 44. For details on 'Abd al-Khāliq's revolt, see Imām al-Dīn, *Ḥusayn Shāhī*, fols. 67a–70b; Gulistāna, *Mujmal al-tawārikh*, ed. Mudarris-Razawī, 125–29; Abū al-Ḥasan Qazwīnī, *Fawā'id al-Ṣafawiyya*, 161–62; Maḥmūd al-Mūsawī, *Aḥwāl-i aqwām-i chahārgāna-i Afghān*, fol. 7b–8a; Elphinstone, *An Account of the Kingdom of Caubul*, 561; Sulṭān Muḥammad, *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī*, 150–51; Fayz Muḥammad, *The History of Afghanistan*, 1:57–58; see also Ghubār, *Afghānistān dar masīr-i tārikh*, 374. Gulistāna indicates that at the time of his revolt, 'Abd al-Khāliq was in control of the province of Shikārpūr and its tax revenues that amounted to 6 lakh (i.e., 600,000) rupees. His revolt seems to have been in part a response to efforts by Tīmūr's officials to collect taxes from Shikārpūr which 'Abd al-Khāliq had until then failed to remit to the royal treasury. According to Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, 'Abd al-Khāliq served as an emissary of Prince Sulaymān to Tīmūr Shāh in Herat just prior to Aḥmad Shāh's passing. It is thus plausible that his revolt was in some way related to Tīmūr's removal of Sulaymān from power; see Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, ed. Murādōf, 2:638b.

³⁰³ Singh provides an account of a revolt supposed to have been led by 'Abd al-Khāliq in 1761, or during Aḥmad Shāh's lifetime. While Singh does not specify his source of information, it is evident that his account is based on that of Ferrier; cf. Ferrier, *History of the Afghans*, 89–90; Singh, *Ahmad Shah Durrani*, 268–69. However, as with

replace him as king with his younger brother, Sikandar.³⁰⁴ The consistent threat posed by the Durrānī to Tīmūr's authority helps to explain the various centralizing policies he implemented at the outset of his reign. One such policy was to reduce the number of Durrānī soldiers in the army while also relying on the royal slave corps (*ghulām-i shāh*) comprised largely of non-Durrānī soldiers.³⁰⁵ Tīmūr Shāh also instituted financial reforms aimed at further weakening the influence of the Durrānī, including ending his father's practice of granting Durrānī proprietors of the *ra'īyyatī* and *nawābād* lands in Qandahar such privileges as tax concessions in exchange for military service. In addition to reducing the number of Durrānī soldiers in the military, Tīmūr Shāh insisted that the proprietors be taxed at a rate commensurate with that remitted by the Pārsiawāns. The Durrānī resisted these reforms, claiming that the privileges Aḥmad Shāh had granted them were hereditary since they represented the real source of his power and authority.³⁰⁶ The tension between the state and the tribes fomented Durrānī discontent towards Tīmūr's government and was a key factor underlying his decision to transfer the royal capital from Qandahar to Kabul in 1186/1773,

other parts of his work, Ferrier's account of 'Abd al-Khāliq's revolt in 1761 should be rejected on multiple grounds, including its factual errors and the fact that it is not corroborated by the primary sources.

³⁰⁴ 'Abd al-Karīm "Bukhārī," *Histoire de l'Asie Centrale*, 1:10.

³⁰⁵ According to Gulistāna, at the outset of his reign, Tīmūr Shāh relied greatly on the "Ishāqzay" (sic) troops commanded by Barkhurdār Khān as well as Qizilbash groups based in Kabul like the Jawānshērs; see Gulistāna, *Mujmal al-tawārikh*, ed. Mudarris-Raḥawī, 126–29. It will be recalled that the Achakzay, the clan to which Barkhurdār Khān belonged, had, along with the Ishāqzay and Qizilbash, formed part of the corps of slave-soldiers or *ghulāms* of Aḥmad Shāh. As a byproduct of his alienating many Durrānī, Tīmūr Shāh came to rely an even greater degree on various Qizilbash groups, especially those based in the province of Khurasan. This is the impression given in a document, reproduced by Wakīlī Pōpalza'i, which details the diverse contingent of Khurasani slave-soldiers (*dasta-i ghulāmān-i Khurāsānī*) in service of the Durrānī monarchs; see Wakīlī Pōpalza'i, *Durrat al-Zamān*, 308–10.

³⁰⁶ See Rawlinson, "Report on the Dooranee Tribes," 518–20. Tīmūr Shāh's policies closely resemble the centralizing reforms effected by rulers of the late Timurid period and their administrators, which was met with stiff opposition from the nomadic military elites. On the centralizing reforms effected in the late Timurid era and the tensions arising therefrom, see Maria E. Subtelny, "Centralizing Reform and Its Opponents in the Late Timurid Period," *Iranian Studies* 21, nos. 1–2 (1988): 123–51; Subtelny, *Timurids in Transition*, 38, 74–102.

the first year of his reign. Besides seeking to distance himself from hostile Durrānī factions in Qandahar, the shift of capital to Kabul was driven by Tīmūr's desire to be closer to the community of Iranian soldiers and scribes—referred to collectively as “Qizilbash”—who had resided in the city since Nādir Shāh's reign; Tīmūr Shāh relied on such non-Durrānī groups since they were removed from intra-tribal disputes and were more loyal to the crown.³⁰⁷

In retrospect, a central cause for the failure of the Durrānī imperial project was the inability of Tīmūr Shāh and his successors to resolve the internal crises that developed after Aḥmad Shāh's death. Although much of his reign was marred by conflict with his tribal subjects, Aḥmad Shāh managed to negotiate tensions with the Durrānī chieftains via a combination of conciliation, coercion, and/or brute force and to thereby assert authority over a vast territory spanning the lands south of the Oxus, east of Mashhad, and west of Delhi. While ultimately unable to command the absolute loyalty of the tribes, Aḥmad Shāh's sustained efforts to co-opt their support and channel their energies towards his imperial aims enabled him to become one of the dominant powers in Asia alongside contemporary rulers like the Ottomans, the Qīng dynasts of China, and the British in India. His great influence was recognized by the British governors of Bengal who kept a watchful eye on the sitting Mughal emperor, ʿĀlī Gōhar, known by his regnal title Shāh ʿĀlam II (r. 1173–1221/1759–1806), and blocked the latter's return to Delhi in part to prevent him from allying himself with Aḥmad Shāh, whom they rightly regarded as the most likely ruler to restore

³⁰⁷ Besides seeking to distance himself from Durrānī tribal support and strengthening ties to the Qizilbash, Tīmūr Shāh's decision to transfer his capital to Kabul was guided by strategic considerations. Namely, Kabul was deemed more centrally located and thus better suited for subjugating restive subjects in the western domains of the Durrānī polity (i.e., Qandahar) while at the same time being an ideal launching pad for future invasions of India; see Imām al-Dīn, *Ḥusayn Shāhī*, fols. 66a–67b; Sulṭān Muḥammad, *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī*, 154; Fayḻ Muḥammad, *The History of Afghanistan*, 1:61. For further details on the reasons underlying the transfer of the Durrānī capital to Kabul, as well as the theory that Aḥmad Shāh contemplated transferring his capital there even earlier, see Wakīlī Pōpalzaʿī, *Tīmūr Shāh Durrānī*, 1:193–96; Ḥāfiẓ Nūr Muḥammad, “Naẓarī bi-tārīkh-i Kābul,” *Kābul* 1, no. 3 (1310 H.sh./1931): 56–58; and Schinasi, *Kabul*, 23–25.

the former power of the Mughals.³⁰⁸ The cautious attitude of the British points to the great influence Aḥmad Shāh wielded both locally and at the regional level at the height of his reign. However, an ominous turning point was the illness he suffered from—apparently a gangrenous ulcer (*ākila*) of the nose that developed from a wound suffered during a horse-riding accident in Kabul in 1182/1768.³⁰⁹ The wound worsened and gradually spread to other parts of his face and his physicians desperately searched for cures but to no avail. Aḥmad Shāh spent the final years of his life largely incapacitated. By the end of the Mashhad campaign in 1184/1771, the last of his career, the malady encompassed much of the left side of his face, including his eye. On the advice of his physicians, Aḥmad Shāh spent part of the summer in the cooler climes of the Margha plain in the Ṭōba mountains south of Qandahar and he succumbed to his illness on 2 Rabīʿ I 1186/4 June 1772.³¹⁰

³⁰⁸ Singh, *Ahmad Shah Durrani*, 343–44; Dow, *The History of Hindostan*, new ed., 2:486–89. On the complex diplomatic relations between Aḥmad Shāh, Shāh ʿĀlam II, and the English East India Company, see Singh, *Ahmad Shah Durrani*, 374–84; J. Heras, “Durrani Influence in Northern India,” *Islamic Culture* 11, no. 4 (1937): 498–511; Birendra Varma, “Ahmad Shah Abdali’s Ninth Invasion and Its Repercussions on the East India Company,” in *Dr. Satkari Mookerji Felicitation Volume*, ed. B. P. Sinha et al. (Benares: Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office, 1969), 322–26; Birendra Varma, “Shah Alam’s Negotiations with the Durrani Afghans (1757–1800),” *Journal of the Bihar Research Society* 57 (1971): 102–7; also see the first three volumes of the *Calendar of Persian Correspondence* (vol. 1, 1759–67 [1911]; vol. 2, 1767–69 [1914]; vol. 3, 1770–72 [1919]); see *Calendar of Persian Correspondence: Being Letters, Referring mainly to Affairs in Bengal, which Passed Between Some of the Company’s Servants and Indian Rulers and Notables*, 11 vols. (Calcutta: Superintendent Government Printing, 1911–59).

³⁰⁹ For further details on Aḥmad Shāh’s malady, see Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, ed. Murādōf, 2:596b–99b; Imām al-Dīn, *Ḥusayn Shāhī*, fol. 60b; ʿAlī Muḥammad Khān, *Taẓkirat al-mulūk-i ʿālī-shān*, fols. 92b–93a; Sulṭān Muḥammad, *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī*, 148; ʿAlī Qulī Mirzā Iʿtizād al-Saltāna, *Tārīkh-i waqāyīʿ wa sawānīh-i Afghānistān*, ed. Mīr Hāshim Muḥaddiṣ (Tehran: Amīr Kabīr, 1365 H.sh./1986), 44; Fayẓ Muḥammad, *The History of Afghanistan*, 1:45; Singh, *Ahmad Shah Durrani*, 325; Farhang, *Afghānistān dar panj qarn-i akhīr*, 143–44. Ferrier also describes Aḥmad Shāh’s malady, though his account, based on the history of ʿAbd Allāh Khān Harātī, is muddled and should be treated with skepticism; see Ferrier, *History of the Afghans*, 91.

³¹⁰ Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, ed. Murādōf, 2:632b–36a; Siyālkōtī, *Shāhnāma-i Aḥmadī*, fols. 413b–15b. For a description of Margha, see Adamec, *Historical and Political Gazetteer of Afghanistan*, 5:330–31. Aḥmad Shāh’s tomb is located in Qandahar next to the shrine housing the cloak (*khirqā*) of the Prophet Muḥammad, which was brought to the city in 1182/1768, a few years prior to his passing. For details on the history of the cloak of the Prophet as well as the construction of its shrine in Qandahar, see Wakīlī Pōpalzāʿī, *Ṭīmūr Shāh*

In general, historians have minimized, if not entirely disregarded, the significant role of Aḥmad Shāh's fatal illness in the decline of Durrānī authority. After all, it occurred at what was the highpoint of Durrānī power and there is evidence that Aḥmad Shāh planned further wars of conquest in north India, the provinces of Iran west of Mashhad, as well as in Central Asia to stem the advances of the Qing empire.³¹¹ After his accident in 1182/1768, however, Aḥmad Shāh's deteriorating health prevented him from leading any further campaigns, thereby stalling the progress of his imperial project (while Aḥmad Shāh attended the final campaign of Mashhad, the expedition was directed by his son Tīmūr).

One could certainly argue that, if not for his fatal illness, Aḥmad Shāh may have maintained order in the Durrānī realm while pursuing his imperial aims and ensuring the stable succession of one of his heirs. He was largely successful in managing the competing interests and loyalties of the Durrānī, who had been a vital—if at times volatile—source of his power. His successor Tīmūr, however, proved far less effective in commanding the loyalty of his Durrānī subjects. As a result, tensions with the tribe erupted into a debilitating power struggle among the ruling elite in the wake of his father's death. With the loss of support of many Durrānī factions, Tīmūr Shāh relied to a greater degree on non-Durrānī administrative and military personnel, further alienating his Durrānī subjects. With much of his energies focused on overcoming internal conflict, especially in the Durrānī heartland of Qandahar, Tīmūr struggled to maintain control of the peripheral provinces in India that

Durrānī, 1:294–301; Wakīlī Pōpalzā'i, *Tārīkh-i khirqa-i sharīfa-i Qandahār* (Kabul: Anjuman-i Tārīkh-i Afghānistān, 1346 H.sh./1967); McChesney, *Waqf in Central Asia*, 222–27; Lee, *The 'Ancient Supremacy'*, 91; S. E. Grigoryev, "Afghan Historical Sources on the *khirqa* of the Prophet Muḥammad," *Manuscripta Orientalia* 8, no. 2 (2002): 5–9.

³¹¹ On Aḥmad Shāh's efforts to stem Qing inroads in Turkistan, see Gommans, *The Rise of the Indo-Afghan Empire*, 62–65; L. J. Newby, *The Empire and the Khanate: A Political History of Qing Relations with Khoqand c. 1760–1860* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 33–36.

Aḥmad Shāh depended on for their wealth of resources but that steadily fell under the authority either of governors who asserted independence or of rival powers.³¹²

The destabilizing effects of the internal conflict that marred Tīmūr's reign points to another central cause for the failure of the Durrānī imperial project: for all the power it projected, the Durrānī state was overly dependent on resources extracted from India. It will be recalled that the initial thrust towards state-formation was the acquisition of the Nādirid treasury that consisted of goods and revenues from India. It is true that Aḥmad Shāh also relied on revenues from local provinces, as evidenced by his efforts to bolster the agrarian economy of his capital region of Qandahar. But while sufficient for placating his Durrānī following, the revenues generated in provinces like Qandahar were minimal compared to those generated in rich Indian provinces such as the Punjab and Kashmir and insufficient for subsidizing mounting state expenditures—the military being the most significant. The inability of Aḥmad Shāh's successors to maintain control of the provinces of India and to extract resources therefrom further exacerbated tensions between state and tribe and eroded the power of the Durrānī monarchs. Indeed, revenues extracted from India were of such fundamental importance for the sustenance of the Durrānī imperial project that it remained a viable enterprise only so long the Durrānī rulers retained control of their Indian possessions. Tīmūr Shāh and his successors attempted to restore Durrānī authority over the Indian provinces ruled by Aḥmad Shāh but the region steadily broke away due to the aforesaid internal crises combined with external pressures. Namely, the Khalsa Sikhs who became the dominant power in north India, established control over much of the Punjab and rebuffed efforts to restore Durrānī authority. Unlike the Marathas, the Sikhs were rooted in the Punjab and posed a more formidable challenge to Durrānī authority. Tīmūr's successors

³¹² On the insurrections Tīmūr faced in Multan, Peshawar, and Kashmir, see Sulṭān Muḥammad, *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī*, 148–61; Fayz Muḥammad, *The History of Afghanistan*, 1:55–71.

also faced the task of stemming the advance of the British who, after bringing much of the Indian subcontinent under their authority, turned their attention to the centres of Sikh and Durrānī power in the Punjab and beyond. Meanwhile, in Iran, the authority of the Durrānī was also challenged by local powers like the Afshārid rulers of Mashhad who began to assert autonomy, and Āqā Muḥammad Khān (d. 1211/1797), founder of the Qājār dynasty, who consolidated power over much of Iran. Not long after Tīmūr's death in 1207/1793, the Qājārs invaded the Durrānī satellite of Mashhad and threatened to capture Herat and adjacent lands from his successors, who were mired in internecine conflicts and scarcely able to fend off external powers.

At the turn of the nineteenth-century, the polity Aḥmad Shāh founded had become significantly reduced in territorial extent. The core provinces that remained under Durrānī authority—namely, Kabul, Jalālābād, Qandahar, Herat and other smaller districts—generated only a fraction of the revenues generated by the lands of north India. As they lost their grip over the Indian provinces, the authority of the Durrānī monarchs deteriorated and, within decades of his death, Aḥmad Shāh's successors—collectively referred to as the Sadōzay dynasty—were lacking in resources and ill-equipped to meet the threats posed by local and regional rivals. By the mid-nineteenth century, the chiefs of the Bārakzay clan gathered enough support, primarily among their tribal support base in Qandahar, to supplant the Sadōzay as rulers of the remnants of the Durrānī realm.

Conclusion: Abdālī-Durrānī History Reconsidered

C.1: The Historical Significance of the Pre-Durrānī Era

While the Abdālī-Durrānī Afghans are arguably among the most influential groups in the history of contemporary Asia, their progression from relative obscurity to political prominence remains poorly understood, even in a country like Afghanistan whose founding was the culmination of over a century of Abdālī-Durrānī rule. The neglect of Abdālī-Durrānī history is reflected in the ambiguity and misinformation surrounding the life and career of its preeminent representative, Aḥmad Shāh Durrānī. For instance, in the modern nationalist discourse of Afghanistan, Aḥmad Shāh is mythologized as the founding father of the country; his most celebrated achievement was to unite the Afghans and, with their support, to establish the “Afghan nation,” hence his moniker “father of the Afghans” (*bābā-yi Afghān*).¹ Yet even the most basic assumptions on which the narrative of Afghanistan’s origins under Aḥmad Shāh rests fail to withstand the test of critical analysis.

One shortcoming of the nationalist narrative is that its proponents, like those subscribing to the “great man” theory of history, tend to credit Aḥmad Shāh almost exclusively for establishing Durrānī rule. But, as Noelle-Karimi has pointed out, the exclusive emphasis on Aḥmad Shāh’s role in the formation of the Durrānī state gives the false impression that the tribe’s ascent to political authority occurred practically overnight.² This attitude is unsurprising given that most sources tend to focus primarily on the career of Aḥmad Shāh while shedding comparatively little light on the pre-Durrānī history of the

¹ Among the numerous works that contain the recurring refrain of Aḥmad Shāh as Afghanistan’s founder include Kōhzād, *Rijāl wa rūydādhā-yi tārikhī*, 1; Ghubār, *Aḥmad Shāh Bābā-yi Afghān*; Singh, *Ahmad Shah Durrani: Father of Modern Afghanistan*; Mohammad Ali, “Ahmad Shah Baba: Father of the Nation,” *Afghanistan* 18, no. 2 (1963): 16–22; Wakīlī Pōpalzā’ī, *Aḥmad Shāh: Wārīs wa mujaddid-i impirātūrī-i Afghānistān*; and Misdaq, *Ahmad Shah Durrani, 1722–1772: Founder and First King of Modern Afghanistan*.

² On this point see also Noelle-Karimi, “The Abdali Afghans,” 31.

Abdālī confederacy to which he belonged. Ironically, the historiographical void may well be related to Aḥmad Shāh's policy of suppressing memory of his tribe's past, as epitomized by his prohibition of the use of the old tribal designation "Abdālī." Despite efforts by certain nineteenth-century authors to remedy the lack of information on the early Abdālī, until recently few studies have been dedicated to the topic. The resultant lack of attention accorded the Abdālī is reflected in most writings on Aḥmad Shāh, which treat the tribe's pre-Durrānī history as little more than an afterthought.³

However, a detailed analysis of Abdālī-Durrānī history in the *longue durée* reveals that the polity Aḥmad Shāh is credited with founding did not emerge in a vacuum. Rather, the process whereby of Aḥmad Shāh's tribe rose from relative obscurity to political prominence was several decades in the making. A brief summary of this historical process is as follows: The early history of the Abdālī-Afghans remains somewhat of an enigma owing to a lack of data. Several authors have speculated that the Abdālī-Afghans may have descended from Hephthalite-related groups who settled in Indo-Khurasan in ancient times, though this theory remains tenuous. We are able to more securely trace Abdālī history back to the beginning in the sixteenth century when historians first take notice of the tribe's activities in Indo-Khurasan. The bulk of pre- and early-Durrānī sources confirm that at this time the Abdālī were a predominantly pastoralist tribe inhabiting the highlands between Qandahar and the Punjab. There is evidence that some of these Abdālī tribesmen also participated as merchants in the lucrative overland trade linking the markets of Central Asia and India.

The earliest documented leaders of the Abdālī tribal confederacy initially rose to prominence in the context of Safavid-Mughal competition for supremacy in Qandahar.

³ Noteworthy exceptions are the recent publications of Noelle-Karimi, which give more consideration to the pre-Durrānī history of the Abdālī; see Noelle-Karimi, "The Abdali Afghans," 31–38; and Noelle-Karimi, *The Pearl in Its Midst*, 74–100.

Although often represented as enjoying closer ties to the Mughals on account of their shared Sunni faith, in actuality, the loyalties of the Abdālī chiefs vacillated between the Safavids and Mughals depending on which regime was in control of Qandahar. This remained the case until the Safavid state established firm control of Qandahar in the latter half of the seventeenth century, at which time the tribe's leaders served the interests of Safavid-appointed governors. On account of their close involvement in local political affairs, the Abdālī were in prime position to fill the power vacuum left behind by the breakdown of Safavid rule throughout Khurasan in the early eighteenth century. A group of Abdālī leaders that included Aḥmad Shāh's father and extended relatives was able to assert independent authority in the province of Herat (ca. 1128–44/1716–32) and its adjacent lands. The Iranian warlord Nādir Shāh, who at this time rose to power in Khurasan (initially in the name of the Safavids before usurping their throne), was able to defeat the Abdālī and incorporate many into the military of his nascent state. But this setback proved to be temporary as the Abdālī reasserted autonomy immediately after Nādir's assassination in 1160/1747.

Of the various Abdālī leaders to emerge in the post-Nādirid epoch was Aḥmad Khān, whose rise to power is best understood in relation to his tribe's pre-Durrānī history. Aḥmad was born into a local family of influence and his father even ruled Herat briefly during the period of Abdālī rule over the province. Aḥmad's chiefly lineage made him a suitable candidate to assume rule as shah of the Abdālī confederacy.⁴ To emphasize his role as founder of a new ruling dispensation, Aḥmad Shāh renamed his tribe "Durrānī" and went on

⁴ Thomas Barfield regards as inaccurate the view that Aḥmad Shāh was "a product of the existing tribal structure." He instead credits Aḥmad Shāh's rise to power to his "previous position as a potent Afshar official"; see Barfield, *Afghanistan*, 98; Thomas J. Barfield, "Problems in Establishing Legitimacy in Afghanistan," *Iranian Studies* 37, no. 2 (2004): 270. But while Aḥmad Shāh sought to alter the Abdālī-Durrānī tribal structure and looked beyond the tribe for additional sources of power and authority, the fact that he very much relied on fellow Durrānī supporters throughout his reign and garnered legitimacy on account of his chiefly lineage suggests he was still very much a product of the existing tribal structure.

to establish authority over what had been the eastern realms of the empire of Nādir as the latter's nominal successor. On account of his feats as ruler, historians have tended to credit Aḥmad Shāh with the formation of the Durrānī polity almost single-handedly. But when considering their long history of involvement in local political affairs, it is clear that his Abdālī forebears paved the way for the emergence of Durrānī rule in the first half of the eighteenth century.

C.2: Reconsidering Aḥmad Shāh as “Founder” of Afghanistan

Aḥmad Shāh's reign unquestionably shaped the course of Afghanistan's history in important ways. But the oft-repeated claim that he was the founding father of the country poses serious methodological problems. Given that the Durrānī polity emerged at a time when the modern system of nation-states, of which Afghanistan is today part, had yet to take hold in Asia, the claim is ahistorical. It is also untenable on geographical grounds since the early Durrānī state was a trans-regional, expansionist polity with fluid borders that extended well beyond the limits of the territorially-bound modern state of Afghanistan. These factors help explain why sources dating back to Aḥmad Shāh's reign are conspicuously devoid of any references to “Afghanistan.”⁵ Instead, the primary sources often describe the early Durrānī domain as comprising large parts of the geographic regions traditionally known as “Hindustan” and “Khurasan”—hence this dissertation's preference for the use of the term Indo-Khurasan.

⁵ The studies of Benjamin D. Hopkins and Shah Mahmoud Hanifi explore how the term “Afghanistan” became applied to the remnants of Aḥmad Shāh's polity in the course of the nineteenth century when the British colonial officials of India began to literally create what is today Afghanistan. See Hopkins, *The Making of Modern Afghanistan*, passim; Hanifi, *Connecting Histories in Afghanistan*, Introduction.

In an effort to help situate the early Durrānī state in its pre-modern context, this study has drawn on the insights of Stephen P. Blake, who, in an important contribution to the scholarship on Mughal studies, critiques the popular view that the Mughal government represented a sort of “undeveloped forerunner” of modern India as it emerged under British colonial rule. Blake shows how the Mughal state represented, in fact, a form of political organization more common among pre-modern states—what in Weberian terms is called the patrimonial-bureaucratic empire.⁶ A similar critique would apply to the supposition that the early Durrānī state represented the crude precursor to modern Afghanistan. Not surprisingly, this assertion is usually invoked without: i) supporting evidence from primary sources composed during Aḥmad Shāh’s reign, or ii) detailing the ways in which the government of the Durrānī state did or did not correspond to that of Afghanistan.

The analysis in Chapter 6 aimed to show how the early Durrānī polity closely corresponded to what Blake and others describe as the Weberian model of the patrimonial-bureaucratic empire. To summarize briefly, Aḥmad was a charismatic chief of the Abdālī confederacy who, largely through the support of a loyal band of supporters comprising the core of his “patrimonial household,” founded the Durrānī polity. To solidify his paramount position within the confederacy, he drew upon the Irano-Islamic tradition of kingship by adopting the regnal title “shah” and asserting that his kingship was achieved through divine favour. He then established a bureaucratic administration based on the Irano-Islamic model that was committed to his personal objectives, as well as on a multi-ethnic army in which soldiers were dependent on his personal largesse.

Given the central role of Abdālī-Durrānī in Nādir Shāh’s state, it is unsurprising that the Durrānī polity was modeled after its Nādirid predecessor. On the ideological level,

⁶ Blake, “The Patrimonial-Bureaucratic Empire of the Mughals,” 77–78.

Aḥmad Shāh presented himself as the nominal successor of Nādir Shāh and thereby laid claim to former Nādirid territories. With respect to the military and administration, Aḥmad Shāh's military was made up of contingents of Durrānī, Qizilbash, Uzbek, and other soldiers formerly in Nādir's army, while his Royal Dīwān employed a number of bureaucrats who had previously served in the Nādirid administration. Thus, in terms of its core institutions of kingship, the military, and the administration, the early Durrānī polity was a continuation of its Nādirid antecedent.

Aḥmad Shāh's co-option of pre-existing state structures and imperial traditions not only reinforces one of this thesis's central arguments that the tribe's pre-Durrānī history is critical to understanding the context surrounding the rise of the Durrānī polity, it also compels us to dispense with the ahistorical assertion that Aḥmad Shāh was the founding father of Afghanistan. The Durrānī polity was, in fact, a trans-regional patrimonial-bureaucratic regime that, structurally and functionally, bore closer resemblance to its pre-modern Mughal, Safavid, and Nādirid counterparts than to the modern nation-state of Afghanistan. It was only in the course of increased interactions with local and regional powers in the nineteenth century, especially British India, that the Durrānī polity was refashioned as "Afghanistan" and integrated into the system of modern nation-states.

C.3: Reconsidering Aḥmad Shāh as Afghan Unifier

Another problematic feature of nationalist-inspired discourses about Afghanistan's origins is the depiction of Aḥmad Shāh as the unifier of the Afghans-Pashtuns. Those who advocate Aḥmad Shāh's role as a paragon of Afghan unity often neglect the fact that it was his Afghan subjects who presented the most significant challenge to his rule. As described in Chapter 6, it was the Abdālī-Durrānī who posed a threat to Aḥmad Shāh's authority

throughout his reign. The dissent among the tribe's chiefs may be traced as far back as the late-Safavid and Mughal periods; but it is at least in part an outcome of Nādir Shāh's policy of altering the organization of the tribe as a means of weakening its leadership, and thereby neutralizing the threat it posed. Nādir's policies created a dynamic in which, after his death, the old and new chiefs vied for the chieftaincy of the Abdālī confederacy. Although Aḥmad Shāh was the eventual victor in this competition, he faced considerable opposition from Abdālī-Durrānī chiefs, as well as from other local Pashtun groups who had been active in the area in the period leading up to his accession. Notable examples include the Tarīnī of Pūshang, Barēchī of Shōrābak, and Ghilzay of Qalāt who initially refused to recognize Aḥmad Shāh's kingship.

Aḥmad Shāh adopted various measures to mitigate the resistance to his rule among his Afghan following. On the one hand, he coopted a core faction of trusted "Abdālī" allies by granting them access to booty and awarding them land grants in his new capital of Qandahar. On the other hand, he introduced various measures intended to curb the influence of his Abdālī following. This included his decision to change the name Abdālī to Durrānī, which derived from his new regnal title, Shāh Durr-i Durrān. To help explain this oft-misunderstood name change, I have argued that the epithet has esoteric significance since it reflected Aḥmad Shāh's spiritual giftedness and was designed to reinforce his status as a divinely elected monarch. I have also argued that by insisting on the use of the new tribal name stemming from his royal epithet, Aḥmad Shāh sought to undermine the threat posed by his Abdālī rivals who might have challenged his authority. By associating the tribe with his new regnal title and thereby severing ties with the contentious Abdālī past, Aḥmad Shāh endeavored to garner the absolute loyalty of his tribal subjects.

To further bolster his status as paramount ruler of the Durrānī, Aḥmad Shāh relied on the Irano-Islamic model of kingship, which, in addition to serving his imperial aims, enabled him to transcend the volatility of tribal politics. He also employed a greater number of non-Durrānī, including many Nādirid soldiers and officials, in the army and administration. Aḥmad Shāh's adoption of an absolutist form of kingship as well as his growing dependence on non-Durrānī personnel exacerbated tensions with the Durrānī and other Afghan factions who resented his growing power at the expense of their autonomy.

The resistance he faced from Durrānī and other Afghan tribesmen, as well as the various measures he adopted to counteract internal dissidence, seriously undermine the assertion that Aḥmad Shāh was a symbol of Afghan unity. Moreover, his implementation of an Irano-Islamic state-structure also raises questions about his status as ruler of a singularly Afghan or Pashtun polity. Indeed, in a recent thought-provoking article critiquing standard narratives of Afghanistan's origins under Aḥmad Shāh, Shah Mahmoud Hanifi argues that the tendency to characterize the Durrānī polity as being dominated by Pashtuns oversimplifies what was in actuality a complex political system "historically dominated by Persianate structures and actors."⁷ But while the Persianate features of the Durrānī polity may appear to undermine claims about its Pashtun identity, I would argue that such features take little away from the essential Pashtun-ness of either Aḥmad Shāh or the Durrānī state he helped found. Despite his reign being plagued by dissidence among his Afghan subjects, it will be recalled that, at a personal level, Aḥmad Shāh was proud of his Afghan-Pashtun heritage, as highlighted in early Durrānī sources that extol his Afghan-Pashtun descent and his status as leader of the Afghan-Pashtun tribes.⁸ To Aḥmad Shāh is attributed a *dīwān* or

⁷ Hanifi, "Quandaries of the Afghan Nation," 86–87, 95.

⁸ To be clear, when Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī refers to Aḥmad Shāh as *jān-i Afghān* or "soul of the Afghans" in the *TASH*, or when the correspondence letter to Sulṭān Muṣṭafā III emphasizes the leadership (*riyāsat*) of Aḥmad

anthology of poems written in Pashto and, as some authors have suggested, his reign also witnessed attempts to introduce Pashto as an administrative language.⁹ With regard to the Durrānī government, although non-Pashtuns were employed in the royal bodyguard, army, and bureaucracy, it was the Durrānī elites and their Pashtun associates who formed the core of the ruler's patrimonial household and who monopolized the top military and administrative ranks of the state. This includes powerful *amīrs* like Shāh Walī Khān and ‘Abd Allāh Khān who oversaw bureaucratic and financial affairs administered by the Royal Dīwān (*dīwān-i a‘lā*), which was the core of the Durrānī government. It is also worth noting that Aḥmad Shāh's Pashtun allies, e.g., the Rohillas, referred to as Bar-Durrānī (or what Wakīlī Pōpalza‘ī calls “Brothers of the Durrānī”), were pivotal to his military successes in India.¹⁰

Aḥmad Shāh's contentious relations with his Afghan-Pashtun subjects and his reliance on non-Afghan officials certainly give reason to doubt his status as unifier of the Afghans-Pashtuns. But it should be stressed that the tension between Aḥmad Shāh and his Afghan subjects was akin to the internal conflicts characterizing a number of clan-based polities predating his reign and does not necessarily preclude the Durrānī polity's Afghan-ness. Furthermore, notwithstanding its noticeable Persianate influences, the Durrānī polity

Shāh and his ancestors over the *īl-i jalīl-i Afghān* or “exalted Afghan people,” the term “Afghan” is being used in its more restricted, pre-modern sense to denote “Pashtun.” For the references in question, see Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, ed. Murādōf, 2:641a, 2:642b; Jalālī, *Nāma-i Aḥmad Shāh Bābā*, 11–12.

⁹ This view is based on the existence of the Pashto manual entitled *Ma‘rifat al-afghānī* or “Knowledge of the Afghan Language,” which was composed by Pīr Muḥammad Kākar (d. ca. 1196/1782), evidently for the benefit of officials working in the Durrānī bureaucracy. For more on the work, see Pīr Muḥammad Kākar, *Ma‘rifat al-Afghānī*, ed. Mawlawī ‘Abd al-Rashīd (Lahore: Islāmiyya Steam Press, 1341/1923); V. V. Kushev, “The Dawn of Pashtun Linguistics: Early Grammatical and Lexicographical Works and Their Manuscripts,” *Manuscripta Orientalia* 7, no. 2 (2001): 3; Green, *Tribe, Diaspora and Sainthood in Afghan History*, 204. While it appears that the *Ma‘rifat al-afghānī* was intended to help Persian-speaking officials expand the reach of the Durrānī bureaucracy into Pashto-speaking areas, it is not entirely evident to me that it was composed as part of any official policy to replace Persian with Pashto as the language of administration either in Qandahar or beyond.

¹⁰ On Aḥmad Shāh's relations with the Rohillas, see Singh, *Ahmad Shah Durrani*, 56–58, 225–65, 280–81; and Gommans, *The Rise of the Indo-Afghan Empire*, 60–61, 170n33.

was undoubtedly dominated by a powerful cadre of Pashtun *amīrs* who formed the core of Aḥmad Shāh's patrimonial household and who monopolized the state's supreme military and administrative offices. Given the pride Aḥmad Shāh took in his Afghan cultural heritage and the centrality of Pashtun groups to his imperial project, it would be counterproductive and misleading to deny the early Durrānī polity its essential Pashtun identity.

The analysis above does raise the question: How can the Persianate features of the Durrānī polity be reconciled with its Pashtun identity? After all, the Persianate system of government of the Durrānī polity appears to contradict its Afghan or Pashtun character, especially from a contemporary perspective, in which Persian and Persianate culture are often regarded as "foreign."¹¹ But it is apparent that neither Aḥmad Shāh nor his peers regarded the Durrānī state's core Afghan-Pashtun identity, on the one hand, and its Persianate features, on the other, as incompatible.

To better understand Aḥmad Shāh's reliance on a Persianate state-structure, it is important to acknowledge in the first instance that the Durrānī state was not a radically novel political dispensation. Aside from the Durrānī Pashtuns forming the ruling class of his polity, which was a unique development, by establishing a Persianate model of governance, Aḥmad Shāh continued what was a well-established pattern among rulers in the eastern Islamic world—whether in Iran, Central Asia, or South Asia—irrespective of ethno-linguistic, tribal, and regional affiliations.¹² This decision to implement an Irano-Islamic administration was undergirded by many pragmatic considerations. For one, despite the fact that myriad

¹¹ Hopkins, *The Making of Modern Afghanistan*, 90.

¹² For studies that describe the significance of Persian/Persianate/Iranian culture not only in Iran but also in South and Southeast Asia, see Muzaffar Alam, "The Pursuit of Persian: Language in Mughal Politics," *Modern Asian Studies* 32 (1998): 317–49; Juan Cole, "Iranian Culture and South Asia, 1500–1900," in *Iran and the Surrounding World: Interactions in Culture and Cultural Politics*, ed. Nikki R. Keddie and Rudi Matthee (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2002), 15–35; and Saïd Amir Arjomand, "The Salience of Political Ethic in the Spread of Persianate Islam," *Journal of Persianate Studies* 1, no. 1 (2008): 5–29.

languages were in use throughout the territories under Durrānī authority, Persian had historically served as the *lingua franca*, or common spoken tongue, as well as the written language of governance in the core provinces of Herat, Qandahar, Kabul, Peshawar, Lahore, etc. In fact, the Abdālī-Durrānī were doubtless familiar with Persianate systems of governance through their long history of interactions with the Safavid, Mughal, and Nādirid regimes in Indo-Khurasan. Moreover, as Aḥmad Shāh came to rule over a largely sedentary population, he would have been aware of the necessity of implementing a relatively sophisticated bureaucracy in order to extract taxes and manage revenues generated from the empire's agrarian economy. Thus, for the purposes of effectively administering an extensive realm in which Persian was pervasive, especially at the level of government, Aḥmad Shāh made the pragmatic decision of inheriting the bureaucratic structures that had long been in place in many of the core Durrānī provinces.¹³ By the same token, he also drew on the experience of pre-Durrānī era officials with expertise in the Irano-Islamic tradition of administration; prominent examples include the head *munshīs* 'Abd al-Hādī and Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī who, as former apprentices of Nādir Shāh's Secretary of the realm (*Munshī al-mamālik*), Maḥdī Khān Astarābādī, possessed a wealth of knowledge of the Iranian

¹³ Although Pashto was the native or mother tongue of the Durrānī Pashtuns, the linguistic barriers that would have been involved in implementing a Pashto-language administration in a nascent empire where Persian was pervasive would explain why Aḥmad Shāh preferred to employ Persian rather than Pashto as the language of the Durrānī administration. Incidentally, the same practical considerations explain why the Ghilzay-Afghan shahs of Iran also presided over a Perso- or Irano-Islamic administration based on the pre-existing Safavid model. It is worth adding that the late-Safavid manual of administration, the *Taẓkirat al-mulūk*, was composed for the Ghilzay shahs of Isfahan whose officials were in need of instruction on matters of administration after the collapse of the Safavid dynasty in Iran. On the circumstances surrounding the composition of the manual and its presentation to the Ghilzay ruler of Iran, Shāh Ashraf, see Minorsky, *Tadhkirat al-mulūk*, 9–10. Some scholars believe that another late-Safavid manual of administration, the *Dastūr al-mulūk*, was also presented to the Ghilzay ruler Shāh Ashraf, though M. Ismail Marcinkowski has posited an earlier date of composition. For more details on the *Dastūr al-mulūk*, see Muḥammad Rafī' al-Dīn Jābirī-Anṣārī, *Dastur al-muluk: A Safavid State Manual*, trans. Willem Floor and Mohammad H. Faghfoory (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda, 2007), xv–xvi; Jābirī-Anṣārī, *Mīrzā Rafī'ā's Dastūr al-mulūk*, trans. Marcinkowski, 1–60.

bureaucratic tradition. Following Nādir Shāh's death, these and other *munshīs* in the Nādirid administration found their way into the service of Aḥmad Shāh whose nascent Durrānī administration was in need of the bureaucratic expertise they could offer.¹⁴ When considered in the light of his practical concerns for establishing an efficient administration, Aḥmad Shāh's reliance on Persianate bureaucratic structures and functionaries may be regarded as a rational step towards meeting the exigencies of ruling a sedentary empire.

Aḥmad Shāh's implementation of a Persian-language administration was closely linked with his decision to adopt an Irano-Islamic model of kingship. As his sphere of influence spread over an increasingly diverse and cosmopolitan "world-empire," the more universal Irano-Islamic tradition of kingship addressed his need to legitimate himself as the ruler of the Afghans as well as of a growing number of non-Afghan subjects. This practical concern helps explain why Aḥmad Shāh asserted his status as both paramount leader of the Afghans based on his noble descent and as king of Afghans and non-Afghans alike on account of his God-given royal charisma. And although Aḥmad Shāh viewed his sacral right to rule as superseding his genealogical prerogative, he nevertheless exploited his noble Afghan lineage as a supplementary form of legitimacy when needed; in this way, he syncretized the traditional Afghan concept of authority based on lineage with the more universal Irano-Islamic conception of kingship.

A constant source of tension between Aḥmad Shāh and his tribal subjects was the inherent contradiction between his kingship, which implied a hierarchical structuring of society, and the Afghan-Pashtun tribal code of conduct, which was more egalitarian in

¹⁴ To provide a sense of the diverse training required of *munshīs* in the service of the related polities of the Safavids and Mughals, see Mitchell, *The Practice of Politics in Safavid Iran*, 1–18; and Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "The Making of a Munshi," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East* 24, no. 2 (2004): 61–72.

nature.¹⁵ To avoid essentializing this complex relationship, it should be noted that monarchy in itself was not a “foreign” concept antithetical to Afghan culture, as evidenced by the long tradition of Afghan rulers—e.g., the Lōdī and Sūrī shahs of India, and the Ghilzay shahs of Iran—who adopted Irano-Islamic models of governance. The same may be said of the formative period of Durrānī rule; it is apparent from his efforts to harmonize Afghan and Irano-Islamic concepts of authority that for Aḥmad Shāh (and later Durrānī rulers), monarchical rule did not contradict his Afghan identity. Moreover, the *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī* indicates that in many cases Durrānī chiefs tried to replace Aḥmad Shāh as king rather than put an end to monarchical rule altogether. Thus, although the monarchical system Aḥmad Shāh implemented did produce tensions with his Afghan-Pashtun subjects, it was not necessarily incompatible with Afghan/Pashtun-ness.

While Aḥmad Shāh and his successors did endeavor to mesh their kingship with their Afghan-Pashtun identity, the monarchical system produced a degree of social stratification that seems to have fomented dissent among the Pashtuns, not to mention the various other ethnic elements of the population. The sources are often vague about the precise nature of Afghan opposition to Aḥmad Shāh but tensions appeared to stem at least in part from the fact that authority within the *ulūs* was traditionally more corporate in nature in so far as it was seen as the shared prerogative of the chiefs of the tribe. Like other Pashtun tribes, the Abdālī-Durrānī developed a class of chiefs referred to as the *khān khēl*, or “chiefly lineage,” who seem to have exercised authority on behalf of the tribe but, as Noelle-Karimi points out,

¹⁵ Some prominent features of the Pashtun tribal code, or what in recent times has been called *Pashtunwali*, are discussed in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., s.v. “Afghān” (by G. Morgenstierne); Fredrik Barth, “Pathan Identity and Its Maintenance,” in *Features of Person and Society in Swat, Collected Essays on Pathans: Selected Essays of Fredrik Barth*, vol. 2 (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981), 103–20; Anderson, “Doing Pakhtu,” 129–42. On the function of the Pashtun tribal code in Durrānī political settings, see Hopkins, *The Making of Modern Afghanistan*, 19, 30, 87–88, 102–5.

only as *primus inter pares*.¹⁶ By contrast, under Aḥmad Shāh we see the development of a more strictly defined hierarchy at the top of which he and a relatively small number of his associates stood, leaving many subordinate tribesmen dissatisfied with their lot in the new Durrānī dispensation. At a broader societal level, the growing authority of Aḥmad Shāh would have resulted in the encroachment of the Durrānī state not only on the urban centres but also on the rural areas of Indo-Khurasan, and this restricted the autonomy of many Afghan tribesmen—Durrānī and otherwise—often to their discontent. What made the dissent among the tribesmen particularly problematic for Aḥmad Shāh was the considerable degree to which he depended on Durrānī manpower for the success of his imperial project. The conflicts arising from his efforts to implement authoritarian rule in a largely tribal society were problems that Aḥmad Shāh and his successors struggled to overcome.¹⁷

This analysis shows that Aḥmad Shāh was neither the architect of Afghan unity nor the ruler of a distinctly Afghan state. The early Durrānī polity was, in fact, a more diverse political organization than is usually acknowledged. Aḥmad Shāh was certainly attached to his Afghan identity and surrounded himself with a trusted band of Durrānī supporters who formed the ruling elite. But to enhance his personal authority, he also adopted the Irano-Islamic tradition of kingship, which vested absolute powers in his person. He also sought to limit the influence of his tribal subjects, who were a potential impediment to his own authority, by incorporating non-Durrānī elements in the army and employing Iranian officials in the bureaucratic administration. The resultant patrimonial-bureaucratic regime of the Durrānī was one in which Afghans were the dominant actors but in which many other ethnic, religious, tribal, cultural, and regional groups were represented at various levels of

¹⁶ Noelle, *State and Tribe*, 20, 152, 156; and Hopkins, *The Making of Modern Afghanistan*, 30.

¹⁷ Hopkins, *The Making of Modern Afghanistan*, 87.

government. Given the diversity of the early Durrānī polity, it would be misleading to characterize the state as “Afghan” in any definitive sense. The polity founded by Aḥmad Shāh may more accurately be labeled by the hybrid term “Irano-Afghan,” as it reflects the strong influence of Iranian and Afghan concepts and actors on the political and cultural orientation of the Durrānī polity.¹⁸

C.4: Abdālī, Durrānī, and Neo-Durrānī: An *ulūs* in Transition

A core assumption of this study is that the Durrānī polity was not a static entity but a fluid organization that frequently had to adapt to the various challenges it faced.¹⁹ To highlight the dynamic nature of the early Durrānī polity, this study has considered the themes of continuity and change as they relate to Abdālī-Durrānī history. With respect to the theme of continuity, it has endeavored to show that a study of the pre-Durrānī history of the confederacy, or *ulūs*, is necessary to appreciate the context of the establishment of Durrānī political authority under the aegis of the charismatic ruler, Aḥmad Shāh.

This study has also aimed to show how an historical analysis of the *ulūs* in both its Abdālī and Durrānī epochs brings into sharper relief the transformation it underwent during Aḥmad Shāh’s reign. One example is the renaming of the *ulūs* Durrānī, which, I have argued, was a product of the contentious Abdālī past with which Aḥmad Shāh sought to make a clean break. The transformation of the *ulūs* is also reflected in the reversal of its political fortunes; namely, whereas the Abdālī had traditionally served the interests of

¹⁸ This is in no way meant to diminish the influence of important state and societal actors who were neither Afghan nor Iranian—whether of Turkic, Indian, or other background. But Iranian and Afghan cultures exerted a particularly strong influence on the Durrānī state that remains pervasive even to the present.

¹⁹ The usefulness of analyzing pre-modern polities as ongoing “processes” over developed “forms” is described in the introduction to Farhat Hasan’s study of Mughal India; see Farhat Hasan, *State and Locality in Mughal India: Power Relations in Western India, c. 1572–1730* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 1–11.

empires that dominated Indo-Khurasan, under Aḥmad Shāh the Durrānī assumed the role of imperial powers in their own right. In this respect, the replacement of the old tribal name “Abdālī” with “Durrānī” also marked the beginning of the imperial era of the tribe’s history.

The establishment of Durrānī imperial rule was also accompanied by the *ulūs*’s transition in terms of its social organization and systems of production, as it was in the reign of Aḥmad Shāh that the formerly pastoralist Abdālī-Durrānī began to engage in agricultural activities on a large scale. The transition of the largely pastoralist Abdālī to the sedentarized Durrānī was related to Aḥmad Shāh’s efforts to ensure the support of the *amīrs* of the tribe who helped bring him to power by awarding them grants of land, primarily in the Qandahar region but also other centres of power. At the same time, Aḥmad Shāh recognized that the increase in power of the Durrānī had the potential to undermine his own authority and so he initiated measures to limit their influence. This created a complex dynamic in which the Durrānī at once represented the main instrument of his coercive capacity as well as a centrifugal force that needed to be reined in.²⁰

Through conciliation, coercion, and other means, Aḥmad Shāh managed to control internal tribal tensions for much of his reign. But rather than fully dissipating, these tensions resurfaced after his death in the form of a succession dispute between his sons Tīmūr and Sulaymān wherein competing Durrānī factions backed one or the other of the

²⁰ Such tensions between rulers and their tribes are not unfamiliar and characterized several other ruling dynasties experiencing social, political, and cultural transitions in the pre-modern era. In her study tracing a similar process undergone by the Timurid dynasts of Khurasan in the fifteenth century, Maria E. Subtelny notes: “The notion of transition is usually associated with movement in history from one form of socio-political or socio-economic organization to another. The process of transition, calling for the modification and even abandonment of deeply rooted concepts and firmly held identities in favour of others that are unfamiliar or even contradictory, is never easy. Nor is the process of transition, which is usually marked by tensions between competing ideologies and loyalties, necessarily completed.” This statement applies nicely to the transition process undergone by the Abdālī-Durrānī in the reign of Aḥmad Shāh and his successors. See Subtelny, *Timurids in Transition*, 2.

claimants. Tīmūr emerged as the eventual victor of the power struggle, but influential Durrānī factions based in Qandahar continued to oppose his rule. The conflict between Tīmūr and these Durrānī factions was a pivotal, albeit neglected, factor behind his decision to transfer the capital from Qandahar to Kabul in 1186/1773, the inaugural year of his reign.

The transfer of the Durrānī capital is related to a broader process that may be described as the “routinization” of the early Durrānī polity, which entailed the transition of the state from an expansionist nomadic polity reliant on a booty economy into a more centralized sedentary state based on an agrarian economy.²¹ While Aḥmad Shāh formed a bureaucratic administration to ensure a regular flow of revenues by taxing the agrarian economies of his domain, the early Durrānī state was nevertheless heavily reliant on a booty economy fuelled by conquest. Since these conquests depended on the manpower of Durrānī tribesmen, Aḥmad Shāh oversaw what in practice was a fiscally decentralized system of landholding and revenue assignment that benefitted the Durrānī factions in his patrimonial household. Upon assuming power, Tīmūr sought to rein in the autonomy of the tribes by initiating an ambitious program of centralization, the cornerstone of which was the elimination of the tax concessions and other financial privileges enjoyed by the Durrānī landholders in Qandahar.²² Tīmūr also lessened the state’s dependence on the Durrānī and increased the number of non-Durrānī military and administrative personnel, including the community of Iranian soldiers and scribes in Kabul known generically as the “Qizilbash,” whom he could depend on to execute his centralizing reforms even in the face of opposition among the Durrānī tribesmen who naturally preferred Aḥmad Shāh’s decentralized system.

²¹ On the Weberian concept of the “routinization of charisma,” see Weber, *Economy and Society*, 1:246–54, 2:1111–19. For the application of this concept to the Timurid dynasty, see Subtelny, *Timurids in Transition*, 4–5, 15, 229–34.

²² For the parallel development occurring in the late Timurid period, see especially Subtelny, “Centralizing Reform and Its Opponents,” 123–51; and Subtelny, *Timurids in Transition*, 74–102.

In this regard, the transfer of the capital away from the rural Durrānī heartland of Qandahar to the cosmopolitan centre of Kabul, which represented a symbolic shift away from dependence on the support of the Durrānī tribesmen, was related to Tīmūr's endeavor to oversee the transition of his polity into a centralized state.²³

The move to Kabul also facilitated the acculturation of the royal family and the ruling elite to Persianate culture—another noteworthy element of the transformation of the *ulūs*.²⁴ While this process of Persian acculturation may on the surface appear to be a predictable outcome of Aḥmad Shāh's implementation of a Irano-Islamic state-structure, it was more closely associated with the centralization policies of Tīmūr; unlike Aḥmad Shāh, who, as mentioned earlier, maintained a strong connection to his Pashtun heritage, Tīmūr was born and spent much of his adulthood in Persianate court settings and was less attached to the Pashto culture of his ancestors. Tīmūr's identification with Persian culture and the considerable opposition he faced from Durrānī factions in Qandahar help explain his decision to transfer the royal capital to the Persian-speaking city of Kabul and to foster the acculturation of the royal family and ruling elite of the Durrānī state.²⁵

²³ This explanation is also proposed by Wakīlī Pōpalzā'ī and May Schinasi. See Wakīlī Pōpalzā'ī, *Tīmūr Shāh Durrānī*, 1:193–95; Schinasi, *Kabul*, 23–24; and Ghubār, *Afghānistān dar masīr-i tārikh*, 374. This is not to suggest that Tīmūr did not rely on any Durrānī tribesmen, but that non-Durrānī actors assumed a more prominent role in the military and administration of Tīmūr's new regime. Notable exceptions are the Bārakzay leaders whose support Tīmūr depended on account of his marriage to the daughter of the Bārakzay chief, 'Abd al-Ḥabīb b. Ḥājji Jamāl Khān. This marriage alliance no doubt factored into Tīmūr's decision to appoint Pāyinda Khān b. Ḥājji Jamāl Khān, his wife's cousin, as one of his chief commanders and to grant him the honorific title Sarfarāz Khān; see Sulṭān Muḥammad, *Tārikh-i Sulṭānī*, 150–51; and Fayz Muḥammad, *The History of Afghanistan*, 1:57–58.

²⁴ For the similar process of acculturation undergone by the Timurids, see Subtelny, *Timurids in Transition*, 3, 27–29, 42.

²⁵ On Tīmūr Shāh's upbringing in Persianate settings and his lack of familiarity with the Pashtun culture of his ancestors, see Elphinstone, *An Account of the Kingdom of Caubul*, 558. Tīmūr Shāh fostered an elaborate court-culture in Kabul, established close ties to the city's Iranian émigré community, composed a *dīwān* of Persian poetry, and earned a reputation for patronizing Persian poets from different parts of Iran and India. His

The interdependent processes of centralization and acculturation that were promoted in Tīmūr Shāh's reign accentuated the growing cultural divide between the ruling class and its Durrānī subjects, a development that would have dire consequences for the Durrānī imperial project. Unlike Aḥmad Shāh, who was able to attract the support of the tribesmen through the force of his charismatic personality as well as the regular distribution of largesse, Tīmūr relied far more heavily on a professional standing army that consisted largely of non-Durrānī troops. This professional army may have been more loyal and efficient, but it was also more costly since it required a steady source of revenues to maintain. Moreover, as a result of the alienation of many Durrānī, the army lost much of the warrior ethos that had fuelled Aḥmad Shāh's famed conquests. The move away from Durrānī tribal support along with the financial burden associated with the upkeep of a professional army proved difficult obstacles for later Durrānī rulers to overcome. The annexation of the major revenue-producing provinces of north India by neighbouring powers exacerbated the situation and Aḥmad Shāh's successors ultimately proved unable to maintain control over the polity he founded.

Dissatisfaction with the rule of Tīmūr and his successors resulted in the emergence of the Bārakzay, a collateral tribal faction of the confederacy who sought to restore the glory of the Durrānī polity. The advent of the Bārakzay as the new dynastic clan was facilitated by internecine conflicts among Tīmūr's numerous sons. A particularly fateful incident occurred in 1214/1799–1800 when Tīmūr's son and successor, Shāh Zamān (r. 1793–1801), executed a group of *amīrs* that included Pāyinda Khān, a chief of the Muḥammadzay segment of the Bārakzay clan, who was accused of having plotted to replace him with a rival prince. Pāyinda Khān's execution triggered an uprising led by his sons, the most prominent being Dōst

fondness for the poetry of the Indo-Persian poet 'Abd al-Qādir "Bīdil" and the latter's protégé, Nūr al-'Ayn "Wāqif," in particular is discussed in Wakīlī Pōpalzā'i, *Tīmūr Shāh Durrānī*, 1:77–96.

Muḥammad Khān (r. 1242–80/1826–63), who, after defeating his rivals, assumed control of the Durrānī capital of Kabul in 1242/1826. It was in the context of the ensuing Sadōzay-Bārakzay rivalry that the agents of the British colonial state of India decided to aid the Sikhs in establishing a state in the Punjab as a buffer against potential Durrānī inroads while at the same time restoring the Durrānī monarchy in Kabul under the puppet ruler, Shāh Shujāʿ b. Tīmūr. British involvement in local affairs set the stage for the First Anglo-Afghan War (1839–42), which ended in the humiliating defeat of the British army and the assassination of Shāh Shujāʿ. In 1843, Dōst Muḥammad Khān returned from exile in India to Kabul and reestablished authority, thereby signaling the formal transfer of power from the Sadōzay to the Bārakzay clans. The ruling dispensation inaugurated by Aḥmad Shāh, which historians often refer to as the Sadōzay dynasty, was thus brought to an end.²⁶

That the Sadōzay and Bārakzay rulers are often understood to be part of a single “Durrānī” ruling dispensation is in large part a legacy of Bārakzay-era historians who sought to give the impression of the “seamlessness” of Durrānī rule under the two dynasties.²⁷ But it is worth noting that the Sadōzay and Bārakzay each had a very different relationship to the name “Durrānī.” While it is true that both clans were affiliated with the Durrānī *ulūs*, the Sadōzay monarchs could claim a genealogical connection to the first king and eponym of the confederacy that the Bārakzay, and all other confederate clans for that matter, lacked.

Their distinct relationships to the Durrānī moniker are helpful in understanding the alternative forms of legitimacy that the Bārakzay devised in response to the continued vitality of Sadōzay royal charisma. Dōst Muḥammad Khān, for instance, refrained from adopting the regnal title “shah” at the time of his “coronation” in 1250/1835 lest he offend

²⁶ For further details on Dōst Muḥammad Khān, see Noelle, *State and Tribe*, passim.

²⁷ Tarzi, “*Tarikh-i Ahmad Shahi*,” 89n41.

the supporters of the Sadōzay as well as his own relatives.²⁸ Instead, he adopted the Islamic title *amīr al-mu'minīn*, or “Commander of the Faithful,” associated with the early caliphs of Islam, while his fellow Bārakzay chiefs were styled *sardār*, or “commander.”²⁹ The emphasis on such military titles reflects a concerted effort to counteract the royal charisma of the Sadōzay by fostering legitimacy based on the military prowess of the Bārakzay, whose chiefs had historically served as *amīrs* in the Durrānī army.³⁰ The concern with legitimating the “seamless” transfer of rule from the Bārakzay to the Sadōzay is detailed in Bārakzay-era chronicles like the *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī* and *Sirāj al-tawārīkh*, which depict Dōst Muḥammad Khān’s grandfather, Ḥājji Jamāl Khān, as having been almost solely responsible for Aḥmad Shāh’s election. While Aḥmad Shāh is acknowledged as the paramount ruler of the *ulūs*, these chronicles reduce his status to leader of the numerically insignificant Sadōzay clan, who owed his kingship to the consent of his *amīr*, Ḥājji Jamāl Khān. The subtext of this revisionist

²⁸ Although Dōst Muḥammad Khān did not adopt the title of shah, he and subsequent Bārakzay *amīrs* ruled in a similar manner to the Sadōzay monarchs. The later Bārakzay ruler Amān Allāh (r. 1919–29), ruling as he was at a time when the vestiges of Sadōzay royalism had long since dissipated, reintroduced the title “shah.” The title was also used by his successors Nādir Shāh (r. 1929–33) and Zāhir Shāh (r. 1933–73) until a coup brought an end to the Bārakzay-Muḥammadzay monarchy in 1973; see Ghubār, *Afghānistān dar masīr-i tārikh*, 751 passim; Nazif M. Shahrani, “Afghanistan from 1919,” in *The New Cambridge History of Islam*, vol. 5, *The Islamic World in the Age of Western Dominance*, ed. Francis Robinson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 542.

²⁹ For an overview of the historical significance of the terms “Amīr” and “Amīr al-Mu'minīn,” respectively, see *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., s.v. “Amīr al-Mu'minīn” (by H.A.R. Gibb); *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. “Amīr” (C. E. Bosworth); also see McChesney, *Central Asia*, 141–42. Although 1250/1835 is sometimes retrospectively given as the date of Dōst Muḥammad Khān’s coronation, this event was more of an investiture than a coronation. At that early stage of his career, Dōst Muḥammad Khān was content to serve as *amīr* for one of the Sadōzay claimants. It was only after the First Anglo-Afghan War (1839–42), when it became clear that the Sadōzay were unlikely to re-establish effective rule, that Dōst Muḥammad Khān asserted independent authority.

³⁰ In this respect Dōst Muḥammad Khān followed, perhaps even wittingly, the example of Amīr Tīmūr who, as a non-Chinggisid, did not adopt the prestigious Chinggisid title of khan; instead, he used the subordinate title *amīr* that hearkened back to the traditional status of his Barlas ancestors as *amīrs* in the *kishik* of Chinggis Khan and his son Chaghatay. For more on this topic, see John E. Woods, “Timur’s Genealogy,” in *Intellectual Studies on Islam: Essays Written in Honor of Martin B. Dickson*, ed. Michel M. Mazzaoui and Vera B. Moreen (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1990), 100–2; and Subtelny, *Timurids in Transition*, 19–23.

narrative is that since the Bārakzay were the real power behind Aḥmad Shāh's throne, it was natural that their leaders would later inherit rule from Aḥmad's descendants.

While the aforesaid Bārakzay-era chronicles embellish the role of Ḥājji Jamāl Khān in Aḥmad Shāh's election, many Durrānī tribesmen appear to have regarded the Bārakzay chiefs as suitable replacements for the increasingly ineffective Sadōzay monarchs, in part because they were key contributors to the Durrānī imperial project from its beginnings. But insofar as they represented a new dynastic clan, and developed alternate strategies of legitimacy to reflect this fact, it would be more appropriate to regard the Bārakzay *amīrs* not simply as inheritors of Durrānī rule but as founders of a "neo-Durrānī" ruling dispensation. Marking the distinction between the Durrānī and neo-Durrānī dispensations in this way is useful because it underscores the different relationships of the Sadōzay and Bārakzay to the name Durrānī. Whereas for the Sadōzay "Durrānī" was tied to their claims to charismatic authority as divinely elected monarchs, for the Bārakzay it was merely a tribal designator devoid of any of the significant political and esoteric implications that it had garnered previously under Aḥmad Shāh and his successors.

An important consequence of the attitude of the Bārakzay towards the name Durrānī is that the motivations for Aḥmad Shāh's adoption of it in place of Abdālī became obscured. Whereas Aḥmad Shāh had prohibited the use of "Abdālī," by the Bārakzay period the old tribal name was again used regularly, and often synonymously with "Durrānī." Indeed, it is ironic that, despite his efforts to distance himself and his confederacy from the old tribal name, Aḥmad Shāh is to this day still frequently described as "Abdālī."

C.5: Enduring Legacies of Aḥmad Shāh's Reign

The foregoing sections of this conclusion have aimed to reconsider the early Durrānī state not anachronistically, as the forerunner of modern Afghanistan, but on its own terms as a patrimonial-bureaucratic regime. But though there are notable differences between the two polities, it is important to acknowledge the ways in which Aḥmad Shāh's rule shaped the political culture of the territories that would later become Afghanistan. Among these enduring legacies of Aḥmad Shāh's reign, three stand out.

The first is the patrimonial form of rule he instituted that was inherited by his successors. This highly personalized system and its intrinsic tribal identity has nurtured what Nazif M. Shahrani calls a "kinship-based" and "person-centered" political culture in Afghanistan. Whether ruling as shahs or as *amīrs*, the leaders of Durrānī, neo-Durrānī, and post-Durrānī regimes represented heads of juntas, surrounding themselves with a band of followers made up primarily of their own kinsmen or ethnic group (*qawm*); and this band of followers (or the "patrimonial household") in turn constituted the state's military and bureaucratic elite. Such systems of political patrimonialism are maintained through an intricate web of patron-client relationships that emanate from the leader and that notoriously foster loyalty to individuals rather than to administrative offices. As office-holders tend to use their positions for personal gain, the system encourages corruption at the state level. Various authors have noted that the Pashtuns, more than any other ethnic group, have benefitted politically from this system by virtue of their historical and cultural ties to the rulers.³¹ But the system generally alienates most social groups who are not tied to the patronage networks emanating from the ruling class and who are treated merely as

³¹ More recent historical examples of the privileged position of the Pashtuns in Afghanistan are discussed in Barfield, "Problems in Establishing Legitimacy in Afghanistan," 279–80; and Shahrani, "Afghanistan from 1919," 546–50.

subjects to be dominated. In Afghanistan's largely tribal society, this system of governance has ensured that loyalty is foremost to kin and that society remains fragmented along ethnic lines. Social fragmentation has discouraged the formation of a cohesive national identity and a civil society that could serve as a force for systemic change.³² Notwithstanding the dissolution of the Bārakzay-Muḥammadzay monarchy in 1973 and the subsequent experimentation with alternative, and less personalized, forms of governance in more recent times, patrimonialism, and its contemporary counterpart, neo-patrimonialism, has proven to be a remarkably resilient feature of the political culture in Afghanistan.³³

The second enduring legacy of Aḥmad Shāh's reign is the close connection he fostered between the Durrānī polity and Islam. This relationship may be traced to the very beginning of his rule when he received support from religious figures, such as the Sufi, Ṣābir Shāh, and especially *pīrs* of the Mujaddidī-Naqshbandī Order, such as Muḥammad ʿUmar Chamkanī.³⁴ Aḥmad Shāh also appointed Mujaddidī scholars to important posts at the royal court. The most influential was Mullā Idrīs Khān, who was among Aḥmad Shāh's intimate companions (*muqarrab*) and who held the posts of Shaykh al-Islam, Military Judge and, for a time, grand *wazīr*. Mullā Idrīs died in 1179/1766, but the influence of this clerical family continued under his younger brother, Mullā Fayẓ Allāh Dawlatshāhī, who served as the

³² On the divisive nature of Afghan nationalism and its role in the crisis of national identity in Afghanistan, see Sayed Askar Mousavi, *The Hazaras of Afghanistan: An Historical, Cultural, Economic and Political Study* (New York: St. Martin's, 1997), 5–13.

³³ For patrimonialism as a core feature of the Durrānī polity, see Shahrani, "Afghanistan to 1919," 209; Shahrani, "Afghanistan from 1919," 555–57; and Saikal, *Modern Afghanistan*, 4–6. On the distinction between classical patrimonialism and contemporary neo-patrimonialism, with special reference to African political contexts, see Michael Bratton and Nicolas Van de Walle, "Neopatrimonial Regimes and Political Transitions in Africa," *World Politics* 46, no. 4 (1994): 458–59.

³⁴ So influential was Ṣābir Shāh's symbolic gesture of placing wheat or grass on the head of Aḥmad Shāh at his accession in 1747 that it was allegedly reenacted at the "coronation" of Amīr Dōst Muḥammad Khān in 1835 when the influential cleric of Kabul, Mīr Ḥājji b. Mīr Wāʿiz, placed shoots of barley on the head of the new ruler to acknowledge his leadership; see Aḥmad ʿAlī Kōhzād, "Two Coronations," *Afghanistan* 5, no. 3 (1950): 38–40.

personal religious instructor of crown prince Tīmūr and as a judge at the latter's provincial court. When Tīmūr succeeded his father as shah, Mullā Fayz Allāh was appointed *Madār al-mahāmm* or "Manager of important affairs" and, in this capacity, served as the ruler's principal advisor.³⁵ Although Mullā Fayz Allāh fell from favour in the reign of Shāh Zamān b. Tīmūr, the political influence of other leading Mujaddidī figures continued into the late-Sadōzay and Bārakzay periods and remains strong in contemporary Afghanistan.³⁶

One of the functions of the religious classes was to sanction the rule of Aḥmad Shāh and his successors on Islamic grounds. In so doing, the religious classes provided the rulers with a broad basis of authority that extended beyond kinsmen and tribe. Islam was also of especial appeal to various Durrānī rulers because it served as a cause around which they could mobilize widespread support among different Muslim groups, often towards some

³⁵ On the role of Mullā Fayz Allāh, also known as Qāzī Fayz Allāh Dawlatshāhī, as Tīmūr's personal instructor on religious matters and political affairs, see Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī, *Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī*, ed. Murādōf, 2:351b–53a, 2:639b; 'Abd al-Karīm "Bukhārī," *Histoire de l'Asie Centrale*, 1:11–13. Fayz Allāh remained a close associate of Tīmūr throughout his reign. But while initially on good terms with Shāh Zamān b. Tīmūr, Fayz Allāh lost the favour of the shah who, allegedly through the machinations of a rival courtier, ordered his arrest and the confiscation of his property. For details, see Imām al-Dīn, *Ḥusayn Shāhī*, fols. 110a–11b; Sulṭān Muḥammad, *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī*, 149, 161–62; Fayz Muḥammad, *The History of Afghanistan*, 1:58–59, 1:71–73; and Wakīlī Pōpalzā'ī, *Tīmūr Shāh Durrānī*, 1:203, 2:319, 2:635–38.

³⁶ Of the many historical examples of Mujaddidī influence on Afghan politics, among the more prominent is the line of Mujaddidī *pīrs* based in Kabul known as the *ḥaẓrats* of Shōr Bāzār, a district in the heart of the old city; regarding Shōr Bāzār, see Schinasi, *Kabul*, 33–40 *passim*. According to family tradition, the *ḥaẓrats* were invited to Afghanistan in Aḥmad Shāh's reign and maintained close ties to the Durrānī state ever since. The *ḥaẓrats* wielded great influence throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In 1978, the last *ḥaẓrat* of Shōr Bāzār, Muḥammad Ibrāhīm Mujaddidī, and many of his male family members were imprisoned (and assumed to have later been executed) by the Soviet-backed government in Kabul. But the influence of the clerical family continues under a relative, Šibghat Allāh Mujaddidī, who is well-known for having briefly served as acting President of Afghanistan after the fall of the last Soviet-backed government in Kabul in 1992. See David B. Edwards, "Charismatic Leadership and Political Process in Afghanistan," *Central Asian Survey* 5, nos. 3–4 (1986): 273–99; and David B. Edwards, "The Political Lives of Afghan Saints: The Case of the Kabul Hazrats," in *Manifestations of Sainthood in Islam*, ed. Grace M. Smith and Carl W. Ernst (Istanbul: Isis, 1993), 171–92. For further details on the close ties between the Mujaddidīs and the Durrānī state, see Wakīlī Pōpalzā'ī, *Tīmūr Shāh Durrānī*, 2:677–95.

political objective. Examples include the frequent calls of Aḥmad Shāh and later Durrānī rulers to *jihād* against various internal and external adversaries. It is important to add that while the ruling establishment often co-opted members of the religious classes, the latter in some cases also used their broad base of authority to serve as a check against both the real and perceived transgressions of the state. This is evident in the frequency with which the religious classes participated in uprisings against the state in the Sadōzay and Bārakzay periods and, of course, in present-day Afghanistan.³⁷

The third, and perhaps most problematic legacy of Aḥmad Shāh's reign is his polity's dependence on "foreign" or "external" resources. Despite his efforts to bolster local agrarian economies in the Durrānī heartland of Qandahar and to establish stable administrative structures in other territories of Indo-Khurasan, the *raison d'être* of the Durrānī polity from its inception was world-conquest, a political ideology predicated on a booty economy fuelled by regular invasions of India. Similarly, many of Aḥmad Shāh's successors in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries were determined to reenact his conquests of north India, ostensibly to rid the region of "infidel" menaces but, above all, to control its resources for the sustenance of the Durrānī polity.³⁸

³⁷ An example is a revolt against Tīmūr Shāh in the Peshawar region that is supposed to have been supported by Miyān Muḥammad Pīrẓāda, the son of Aḥmad Shāh's *pīr*, Muḥammad 'Umar Chamkanī; see Imām al-Dīn, *Ḥusayn Shāhī*, fols. 70a–73b; Elphinstone, *An Account of the Kingdom of Caubul*, 560–61; Sulṭān Muḥammad, *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī*, 152–53; and Fayẓ Muḥammad, *The History of Afghanistan*, 1:59–61. A more recent example is the uprising against Shāh Amān Allāh which received widespread backing from the religious classes; for more on this topic, see Senzil K. Nawid, *Religious Response to Social Change in Afghanistan 1919–29: King Aman-Allah and the Afghan Ulama* (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda, 1999); and Fayẓ Muḥammad Kātīb Hazāra, *Kabul under Siege: Fayz Muhammad's Account of the 1929 Uprising*, trans. R. D. McChesney (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener, 1999).

³⁸ Anderson notes how Aḥmad Shāh's conquests continued to inspire various governments of Afghanistan of the twentieth century to make irredentist territorial claims over north India. On this point, and the archetypal and mythological status with which Aḥmad Shāh and his empire is accorded at a societal level in Afghanistan, see Anderson, "Doing Pakhtu," 29–32.

British colonial authorities in nineteenth-century India were cognizant of the dependence of Durrānī rulers on Indian wealth and plunder and devised various strategies to mitigate the threat of invasion. These included forming a tenuous alliance with the Sikhs whom they helped to create a buffer state in the Punjab. With the Durrānī ruling class mired in internecine conflicts throughout the 1820s and 1830s, the Sikhs extended control over the former Durrānī territories in the Punjab and in Kashmir. In 1839, the British then led an invasion of the Durrānī kingdom with the intention of installing the compliant Durrānī prince, Shāh Shujāʿ, as their puppet in Kabul.³⁹ While the war ended in disaster for the invaders, it inaugurated a lengthy period of British influence that spanned several decades and witnessed two additional armed confrontations—the Second (1878–80) and Third (1919) Anglo-Afghan Wars. Between 1842 and 1919, the British retained control of the foreign affairs of the Durrānī state, or “Afghanistan” as it came to be known officially in this period, in exchange for supplying its rulers with subsidies and weapons. This arrangement resulted in Afghanistan becoming a “fiscal colony,” to borrow Benjamin D. Hopkins’s terminology, on the margins of the British empire.⁴⁰ Successive Bārakzay rulers, perhaps most notably Amīr ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Khān,⁴¹ relied on British subsidies and weapons to initiate programs of economic and political centralization that entailed the subjugation of Afghanistan’s various ethnic groups in what some authors have dubbed a process of “internal imperialism” or

³⁹ For a detailed analysis of Anglo-Sikh and Anglo-Afghan relations, and the extent to which Russian expansion in Central Asia affected said relations, see Hopkins, *The Making of Modern Afghanistan*.

⁴⁰ Hopkins, *The Making of Modern Afghanistan*, 169.

⁴¹ As outlined in several studies, the Durrānī ruler who most profoundly shaped the nation-state of Afghanistan was not Aḥmad Shāh but, in fact, the later Bārakzay ruler, Amīr ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Khān. For studies outlining his lasting impact on Afghanistan, see Dupree, *Afghanistan*, xix, 415–29; M. Hassan Kakar, *Government and Society in Afghanistan: The Reign of Amir ʿAbd Al-Rahman Khan* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1979); Kakar, *A Political and Diplomatic History of Afghanistan*; and Hanifi, *Connecting Histories in Afghanistan*, Chapter 4 passim.

“internal colonialism.”⁴² The state’s depredation of its subjects deepened divisions in Afghanistan’s already fragmented society.

The substitution of resources extracted from India in the pre-colonial period with subsidies from the British colonial regime in India reinforced the Durrānī state’s historical dependence on “external” support. Despite the assertion of independence from the British in 1919 and attempts to develop a self-sufficient national economy, a recurring theme in the more recent history of Afghanistan has been the dependence of its various governments on foreign support and the sluggish pace of internal development in the country, both key factors underlying the seemingly perpetual impoverishment of state and society.

⁴² Dupree, *Afghanistan*, xix; Nazif M. Shahrani, “Resisting the Taliban and Talibanism in Afghanistan: Legacies of a Century of Internal Colonialism and Cold War Politics in a Buffer State,” *Perceptions: Journal of International Affairs* 5, no. 4 (2000): 121–40; Shahrani, “Afghanistan from 1919,” 554–55.

Glossary

abdāl (sing. *badal*) — lit., “substitutes”; a technical term denoting the class of Muslim saints whose existence ensures cosmic stability; in more recent times, the Arabic term *abdāl* has been conflated with the tribal name Abdālī/Awdālī, which is of uncertain etymology

ākhūnd — religious instructor

amīn al-mulk — in the Durrānī context, the office of head revenue assessor

amīr (pl. *umarāʾ*) — leader, commander; often used as a military title

arbāb-i qalam — lit., “masters of the pen”; denotes bureaucrats employed at the royal court

ashraf al-wuzarāʾ — the most eminent of the *wazīrs*; see also *wazīr*

ʿaskar — soldiery, military; the military apparatus of the Durrānī state

āstāna/astāna/stāna — entrance, threshold; in Pashto, the term can also refer to the family of holy persons or saints

bēg — aristocrat, chieftain, leader, nobleman

bēglarbēg — lit., “*bēg* of *bēgs*”; governor-general

bēgum — feminine of *bēg*; female aristocrat, noblewoman

buzgar — husbandman

chindawul — rearguard

chindawul bāshī — head of the rearguard

crore — Indian numbering unit amounting to 100 lakhs, or 10,000,000; see also *lakh*

daftar-khāna — records office

dah bāshī — head of ten troops

dār al-inshāʾ — chancery, chancellery, secretariat

darwīsh — Sufi, Muslim mystic, mendicant

dawlat — good fortune, dominion, dynasty; often used to denote government

dēra — valley

dih — village

dīwān — anthology of poetry

dīwān — the administrative apparatus of the Durrānī state

dīwān bēg — head of the royal *dīwān*

dīwān-i aʿlā — royal *dīwān*

dīwān-khāna-i aʿlā — royal *dīwān* office

farmān — royal order, royal edict; cf. *raqam*

farr — kingly glory, charisma, effulgence

farsakh — unit of distance amounting to approximately 3 miles

fiqh — Islamic jurisprudence

ghāzī — warrior for the faith

ghulām — slave, slave-soldier; cf. *qūl*

hajj — pilgrimage to Mecca

hājī — title denoting a person who has made the pilgrimage to Mecca

hamēsha-kishīk — permanent guard corps; see also *kishīk*

ijāra — agricultural tax revenues

īl — peoples, tribal confederacy

inshāʾ-i hūzūr — private secretariat

īshīk-āqāsī bāshī — head chamberlain

jīgha — royal plume, royal diadem

iʿtimād al-dawla — pillar of the state; senior administrative office

kalāntar — a title given to a prefect or headman of a city/town or community

khalīfa/khalīfat (pl. *khulafāʾ*) — vicegerent; used in Sufi contexts to denote successors or deputies of a *pīr*; cf. *pīr*

khālīṣa (pl. *khālīṣajāt*) — “crown” or “state” property, especially land, the revenues of which is remitted directly to the royal treasury

khān (pl. *khawānīn*) — aristocrat, chieftain, leader, nobleman

khān-i ʿulūm — lit., “master of the sciences”; a title given to leading members of the ʿulamāʾ with expertise in the religious sciences

khān khēl — chiefly lineage

kharwār — assload

khēl — patrilineage, descent group

khilāfa/khilāfat — vicegerency

khushk-āba — dry or barren lands; lands requiring irrigation for cultivation

khuṭba — sermon delivered during the Friday congregational prayer

khwāja — master; a title used by/applied to leading figures of Sufi orders

kishīk — imperial guard

kishīkchī — imperial guardian; member of the imperial guard

kishīkchī bāshī — head of the imperial guard

kōtwāl — custodian of a fort of a town; magistrate

kulba/qulba — a plot of arable land; in early-Durrānī Qandahar, a *kulba/qulba* amounted to approximately 3,000 square yards, or roughly the area of land that could be cultivated by one husbandman (*buzgar*), a yoked pair of oxen, and one plough

lakh (lak) — Indian numbering unit amounting to 100,000

mamlakat — domain, country, realm, possessions (i.e., land)

marzbān — margrave, border patroller

mawrūs — hereditary, patrimony

mazār — sacred shrine

mazhab — school of Islamic jurisprudence

mīng bāshī/mīn bāshī — head of a thousand troops

mīr — contraction of “*amīr*”; leader, commander, head

mīr-ākhūr bāshī — master of the stables, chief equerry

mīr-shikār bāshī — master of the hunt

mīrās — birthright, inheritance, patrimony

mīrzā — contraction of *amīrzāda* or “son of the *amīr*”; in the Durrānī context, the title *mīrzā*, along with *mīr*, was used to denote the class of bureaucrats employed at the royal court

mullā — variant of *mawlā* or “master”; religious leader

mullā bāshī — head *mullā*; senior religious office at the Durrānī court

munshī — scribe, secretary

- munshī bāshī* — head scribe, head secretary; senior civilian office at the Durrānī court
- murīd* — disciple of a *pīr* of a Sufi order
- mustawfi* — comptroller
- mutaṣaddī* — accountant
- nasab* — lineage, ancestry, genealogy, lineal descent
- nawābād* — newly cultivated land; refers to once barren land made arable by irrigation
- pawinda/kūchī* — nomadic Afghan-Pashtun tribal trader
- pīr* — lit., “elder”; titled used for spiritual masters or heads of Sufi orders
- qabila* (pl. *qabāyil*) — tribe, clan, lineage, descent group
- qābūchī bāshī* — head gatekeeper
- qal‘a* — fortress, citadel, often of a large city or district
- qāzī* — judge with specialized knowledge of the *sharī‘a*; see also *sharī‘a*
- qāzī-i ‘askar* — military judge
- qawm* (pl. *aqwām*) — tribe, clan, lineage, descent group
- qishlāq* — winter quarters; seasonal pastures inhabited by nomadic tribes in the winter
- qūl* (pl. *qūllar*) — slave, slave-soldier; cf. *ghulām*
- qūllar-āqāsī* — head of the slave-soldiers
- qūrchī bāshī* — head of the tribal forces
- ra‘īyyatī* — land reserved for peasantry
- raqam* — royal decree
- rūpīya* — rupee, South Asian unit of currency
- salṭanat* — authority, dominion, sovereignty
- ṣandūq-khāna* — treasury office
- sardār* — military commander; title adopted the Bārakzay *amīrs*
- sarkār* — administrative district, province, realm
- sayyid* (pl. *sādāt*) — descendant of the Prophet
- shāh/pādshāh/bādshāh* — king

shāhzāda — lit., “son of the king”; prince

shajara — tree, family tree, genealogical tree

sharīʿa — Islamic law

shaykh — religious leader, head of a Sufi order

sikka — coinage

silsila — lit., “chain” or “series”; dynasty, lineage, ancestry; also used to denote spiritual lineages of Sufi orders and their *pīrs*

sūba/ṣūba — province

sulṭān — ruler, sovereign, a person with power and authority

ṭāyifa (pl. *ṭawāyif*) — tribe, clan, lineage, descent group

tiyūl — tax-free land grants awarded to Durrānī *amīrs* in exchange for military service

tōra — lit., “customary law”; customary laws based on the practice of Chinggis Khān

tūpchī bāshī — head of the heavy artillery

‘*ulamā*’ (sing. ‘*ālim*’) — class of religious scholars

ulūs/ūlūs — tribal confederacy/confederation, confederacy/confederation

urdū — royal court

walī — saint, blessed person, friend

wazīr (pl. *wuzarāʾ*) — minister; see also *ashraf al-wuzarāʾ*

wilāyat — province; in early modern Indian contexts, a term used to denote the Afghan-inhabited territories of Indo-Khurasan

yasāwul — aide-de-camp

yaylāq — summer quarters; seasonal pastures inhabited by nomadic tribes in the summer

yūz bāshī — head of a hundred troops

ẓarrāb bāshī — master of the mint

-*zay* (pl. *zī*) — derived from Pashto *zōy*, meaning “son,” -*zay* is used as a suffix of personal names meaning “descendant of” (e.g., *Sadōzay* or *Sadō* + -*zay* = “descendant of *Sadō*”); cognate of Persian “-*zāda*”

ziyārat — lit., “visitation”; used to denote pilgrimage sites

Appendix 1: Genealogical Tables of the Abdālī-Durrānī *nasab*

Genealogical Table 1: The Abdālī-Durrānī *nasab* in the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī*

Tarīn			
Abdāl	Spīn	Tūr	
Razar	Sulaymān		
‘Isā	‘Alī	Adō	
Zīrak	Mīr	Nūr	
Fōfal	Bārak	Alakō	Musā
Ḥabīb	Ayyūb	Bāzō	
Bāmī	Abū Sa‘īd	Ismā‘īl	Ḥasan
Kanī	Bahlūl	Nuṣrat	Bashahmā (sp.?)
Bahlūl	Zīnak	Bānū	
Ma‘rūf	‘Alī Khān		
‘Umar			
Asad Allāh (Sadō)	Ṣāliḥ		

Source: *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī*, fols. 2b–21b.

Genealogical Table 2: The Sadōzay *nasab* in the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī*

Asad Allāh (Sadō)

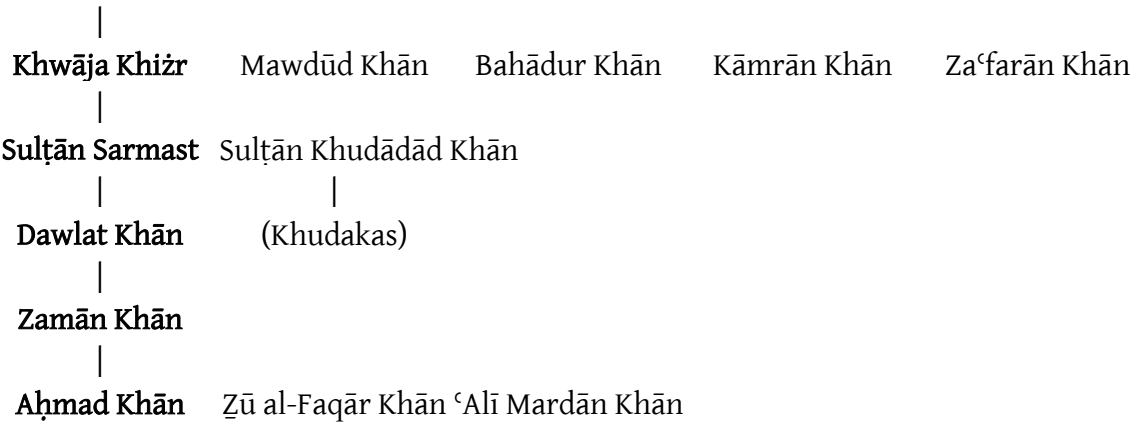
↓				
Khawāja Khizr	Maghdūd	Za‘farān	Kāmrān	Bahādur
↓				
Shēr Khān	Khudādād Sultān			
↓	↓			
Sarmast Khān	(Khudakas)			
↓				
Dawlat Khān				
↓				
Zamān Khān	Rustam Khān	Nazar Khān		
↓				
Aḥmad Khān	Ẓū al-Faqār	‘Alī Mardān		

Source: *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī*, fols. 21b–56b.

Genealogical Table 3: The Abdālī-Durrānī *nasab* in the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ʿālī-shān*

ʿAbd al-Rashīd b. Qays al-Layk			
Sarban			
Sharkhabun			
(lengthy generational gap)			
Abdāl	Spīn	Tūr	
Rajar			
ʿIsā	Nūr	Khūkār	Mākū
Zīrak	Ishāq	ʿAlī	
Pōpal	Bārak	Alakō	
Ḥabīb	Ayyūb	Bādō	
Bāmī	Ismāʿīl	Ḥasan	
Ṣāliḥ	ʿAlī	Zaʿīl	Warūka
Sadō			

Source: ʿAlī Muḥammad Khān, *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ʿālī-shān*, fols. 6a–13b.

Genealogical Table 4: The Sadōzay *nasab* in the *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān***Asad Allāh (Sadō)**

Source: ‘Alī Muḥammad Khān, *Tazkirat al-mulūk-i ‘ālī-shān*, fols. 17b–74b passim.

Genealogical Table 5: The Abdālī-Durrānī *nasab* in the *Tārīkh-i khūrshīd-i jahān*

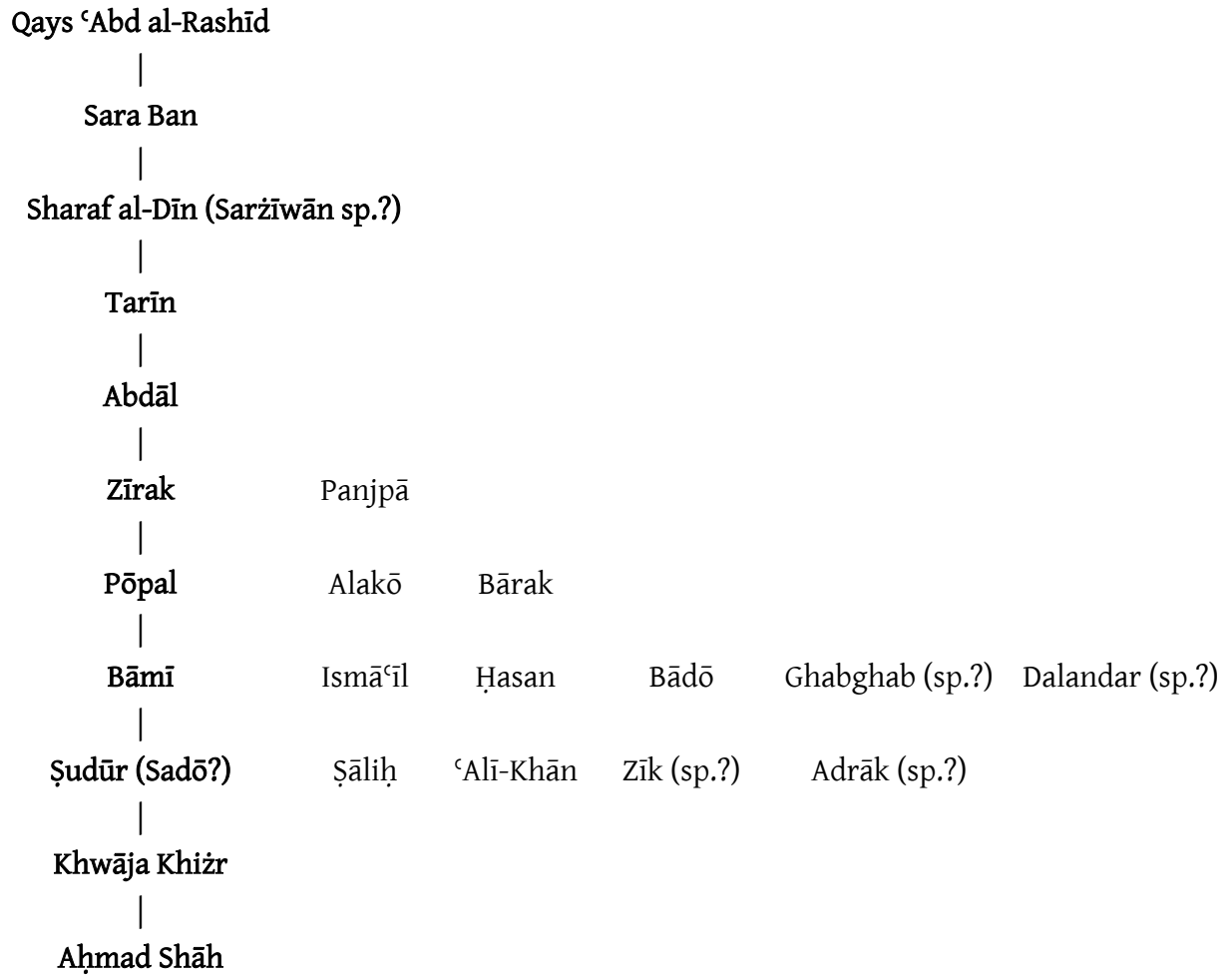
Qays ‘Abd al-Rashīd Pathān

Sarban					
Sharkhabun					
Tarīn					
Abdāl	Spīn	Tūr			
Zakhtar (sp?)	Sulaymān				
‘Isā	‘Alī	Adō	Mākū	Khākū	
Zīrak	Mīr	Nūr			
Pōpal	Bārak	Alakō	Musā (sp?)		
Ḥabīb	Ayyūb	Bādō			
Bāmī	Ḥasan	Ismā‘īl	Bādō	Ghāzab (sp?)	Qaland[ar] (sp?)
Ṣadō	Ṣāliḥ	‘Alī Khān	Ītak (sp?)	Ōrak	

Source: Gandāpūrī, *Tārīkh-i khūrshīd-i jahān*, 180–82.

Genealogical Table 6: The Sadōzay *nasab* in the *Tārīkh-i khūrshīd-i jahān*

Source: Gandāpūrī, *Tārīkh-i khūrshīd-i jahān*, 182.

Genealogical Table 7: The Abdālī-Durrānī *nasab* in the *Ḥusayn Shāhī*

Source: Imām al-Dīn, *Ḥusayn Shāhī*, fols. 5a–7b.

Genealogical Table 8: The Abdālī-Durrānī *nasab* in the History of ‘Abd al-Karīm “Bukhārī”

					Abdāl				
Ṣadō	Fōlfōl	Bārak	‘Alīkō	Nūr	Ishāq	‘Alizō	Khūkān	Bar-Durrān	Andar

Source: ‘Abd al-Karīm “Bukhārī,” *Histoire de l’Asie Centrale*, 1:7.

Genealogical Table 9: The Abdālī-Durrānī *nasab* in the *Ḥayāt-i Afghānī*

Qays ‘Abd al-Rashīd				
Sara Ban				
Sharkhabun				
Tarīn				
Abdāl	Spīn	Tūr		
Rajāl or Razar	Sulaymān			
‘Isā	Mākū	‘Alī	Adō	Khākwānī
Sulaymān (Zīrak)	Mīr	Nūr		
Pōpal	Bārak	‘Alīkō	Mūsā	
Ḥabīb	Bādō or Bākō	Ayyūb		
Bāmī	Ismā‘īl	Ḥasan	Bū Sa‘īd	
Kānī	Basāmā (sp.?)	Nuṣrat	Qalandar	
Bahlūl	Zīnak	Bānū		
Ma‘rūf	‘Alī Khān			
‘Umar				
Asad Allāh (Sadō)	Ṣāliḥ			

Source: Ḥayāt Khān, *Ḥayāt-i Afghānī*, 117-18, 121-29. The Sadōzay *nasab* given on pp. 119, 130-31 of Ḥayāt Khān’s work is nearly identical to that found in the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* and need not be reproduced here.

Genealogical Table 10: The Abdālī-Durrānī *nasab* in the *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī*

‘Abd al-Rashīd Pathān

Sara Banī			
Sharkhabun			
Tarīn			
Awḍal	Spīn	Tūr	
Razar			
‘Isā	Nūr	Sulaymān	Ishāq
Zīrak	‘Alī	Adō	
Fōfal	Bārak	Alakō	Mūsā
Ḥabīb	Ayyūb	Bādō	
Bāmī	Ismā‘īl	Ḥasan	Bū Sa‘īd
Ganī	Bashahmā (sp.?)	Nuṣrat	
Bahlūl	Zīnak	Bānū (Bātū?)	
Ma‘rūf	‘Alī Khān		
‘Umar			
Asad Allāh (Sadō)	Ṣāliḥ		

Source: Sulṭān Muḥammad, *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī*, 52–58. The Sadōzay *nasab* given on pp. 58–68 of Sulṭān Muḥammad’s work is nearly identical to that found in the *Shajara-i Afghānī-i Abdālī* and need not be reproduced here.

Appendix 2: Governors of Qandahar from Bābur to Aḥmad Shāh Durrānī

<u>Name of Governor</u>	<u>Dynasty – Ruler(s)</u>	<u>Years in Office</u>
Kāmrān Mīrzā ¹	(Mughals – Bābur)	- 928–37/1522–30
Khwāja Kalān ²	(Mughals – Kāmrān Mīrzā)	- 937–43/1530–37
Būdāq Khān ³	(Safavids – Ṭahmāsp I)	- 943–44/1537–38
‘Askarī Mīrzā ⁴	(Mughals – Kāmrān Mīrzā)	- 944–52/1538–45
Būdāq Khān ⁵	(Safavids – Ṭahmāsp I)	- 952/1545
Bayrām Khān ⁶	(Mughals – Humāyūn)	- 952/1545
Shāh Muḥammad Khān Qalātī ⁷	(Mughals – Humāyūn/Akbar)	- 952–65/1545–58
Sulṭān Ḥusayn Mīrzā ⁸	(Safavids – Ṭahmāsp I)	- 965–84/1558–76
Muẓaffar Ḥusayn Mīrzā b. Sulṭān Ḥusayn Mīrzā ⁹	(Safavids – Ismā‘īl II, Khudābanda, ‘Abbās I)	- 984–1003/1576–94 or 95
Shāh Bēg Khān ¹⁰	(Mughals – Akbar, Jahāngīr)	- 1003–16/1594 or 95–1607
Sardār Khān a.k.a. Tōkhta Bēg Kābulī ¹¹	(Mughals – Jahāngīr)	- 1015–16/1606–7
Mīrzā Ghāzī Tarkhān ¹²	(Mughals – Jahāngīr)	- 1016–22/1607–13
Bahādur Khān a.k.a. Abūl Bēy Uzbek ¹³	(Mughals – Jahāngīr)	- 1022–30/1613–20
‘Abd al-‘Azīz Khān a.k.a. Ṣādiq Khān ¹⁴	(Mughals – Jahāngīr)	- 1030–31/1620–22
Ganj ‘Alī Khān ¹⁵	(Safavids – ‘Abbās I)	- 1031–34/1622–24 or 25
‘Alī Mardān Khān ¹⁶	(Safavids – ‘Abbās I/Ṣafī I)	- 1034–47/1624 or 25–38
Sa‘īd Khān ¹⁷	(Mughals – Shāh Jahān)	- 1047/1638
Qīlīch Khān ¹⁸	(Mughals – Shāh Jahān)	- 1047–50/1638–41
Ṣafdar Khān ¹⁹	(Mughals – Shāh Jahān)	- 1050–55/1641–45

Saʿīd Khān	(Mughals – Shāh Jahān)	- 1055–56/1645–46
Luṭf Allāh b. Saʿīd Khān ²⁰	(Mughals – Shāh Jahān)	- 1056–57/1646–47
Saʿīd Khān	(Mughals – Shāh Jahān)	- 1057/1647
Khawāṣṣ Khān a.k.a. Dawlat Khān ²¹	(Mughals – Shāh Jahān)	- 1057–59/1647–49
Mihrāb Khān a.k.a. Shamsheṛ ʿAlī ²²	(Safavids – ʿAbbās II)	- 1059/1649
Awtār Khān a.k.a. Zū al-Faqār Khān ²³	(Safavids – ʿAbbās II)	- 1059–73/1649–62
Garjāsbī Bēg a.k.a. Maṣṣūr Khān ²⁴	(Safavids – ʿAbbās II)	- 1073–/1662–?
Najaf Qulī Khān ²⁵	(Safavids – ʿAbbās II)	- ??
Jamshīd Khān ²⁶	(Safavids – Sulaymān I)	- 1077–??/1666–??
Zāl Khān ²⁷	(Safavids – Sulaymān I)	- 1082–83/1672–73
Ḥamza Khān ²⁸	(Safavids – Sulaymān I)	- ??
Aslamas Bēg a.k.a. Aṣlān Khān ²⁹	(Safavids – Sulṭān Ḥusayn)	- 1105–7/1694–95
Muḥammad ʿAlī Khān ³⁰	(Safavids – Sulṭān Ḥusayn)	- 1107/1695
Dūrmīsh Khān a.k.a. Maṣṣūr Khān ³¹	(Safavids – Sulṭān Ḥusayn)	- 1108/1696–97
Kalb ʿAlī Khān ³²	(Safavids – Sulṭān Ḥusayn)	- 1110/1698
ʿAbdullāh Khān ³³	(Safavids – Sulṭān Ḥusayn)	- 1110/1698–99
Gurgīn Khān a.k.a. Shāh Nawāz Khān ³⁴	(Safavids – Sulṭān Ḥusayn)	- 1110–21/1699–1709
Mīr Ways Hōtakī ³⁵	(Ghilzay)	- 1121–27/1709–15
Mīr ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz Hōtakī ³⁶	(Ghilzay)	- 1128–30/1715–17
Mīr Maḥmūd Hōtakī b. Mīr Ways ³⁷	(Ghilzay)	- 1130–34/1717–21
Mīr Ḥusayn Hōtakī b. Mīr Ways ³⁸	(Ghilzay)	- 1134–50/1721–38
ʿAbd al-Ghanī Khān Alakōzay ³⁹	(Nādir Shāh)	- 1150–55?/1738–43?
Ḥājji Khān Alakōzay b. ʿAbd al-Ghanī Khān ⁴⁰	(Nādir Shāh)	- 1155?–60/1743?–47

References

- ¹ Mīrzā Muḥammad Ḥaydar Dūghlāt, *Tārīkh-i Rashīdī*, ed. ‘Abbās Qulī Ghaffārī-fard (Tehran: Mīrās-i Maktūb, 1383 H.sh./2004), 552–53, 591; and Iskandar Bēg, *Tārīkh-i ‘ālam-ārā-yi ‘Abbāsī*, 1:65, 1:90–92.
- ² Dūghlāt, *Tārīkh-i Rashīdī*, 672–74; Iskandar Bēg, *Tārīkh-i ‘ālam-ārā-yi ‘Abbāsī*, 1:62, 1:65, 1:90–92; and Riazul Islam, *Indo-Persian Relations: A Study of the Political and Diplomatic Relations between the Mughal Empire and Iran* (Tehran: Iranian Cultural Foundation, 1970), 22–24.
- ³ Iskandar Bēg, *Tārīkh-i ‘ālam-ārā-yi ‘Abbāsī*, 1:65–66, 90–92; and Islam, *Indo-Persian Relations*, 25.
- ⁴ Iskandar Bēg, *Tārīkh-i ‘ālam-ārā-yi ‘Abbāsī*, 1:65–66, 90–92; and Islam, *Indo-Persian Relations*, 25–26, 40–43.
- ⁵ Iskandar Bēg, *Tārīkh-i ‘ālam-ārā-yi ‘Abbāsī*, 1:90–92; and Islam, *Indo-Persian Relations*, 41.
- ⁶ Iskandar Bēg, *Tārīkh-i ‘ālam-ārā-yi ‘Abbāsī*, 1:90–92; and Awrangābādī, *The Ma’āsir al-umarā’*, ed. ‘Abd al-Raḥīm and Ashraf ‘Alī, 1:371–84. For an English translation of the foregoing section of *The Ma’āsir al-umarā’*, see Awrangābādī, *The Maāthir-ul-umarā: Being Biographies of the Muḥammadan and Hindu Officers of the Timurid Sovereigns of India from 1500 to about 1780 A.D.*, trans. Henry Beveridge and Baini Prashad, 2nd ed., 3 vols (Calcutta: Asiatic Society, 1941–64), 1:368–78; see also Islam, *Indo-Persian Relations*, 44. Bayrām Khān engaged in many campaigns with Humāyūn in India, at which times he apparently left Shāh Muḥammad Khān Qalāti in control of Qandahar.
- ⁷ Iskandar Bēg, *Tārīkh-i ‘ālam-ārā-yi ‘Abbāsī*, 1:90–93; Islam, *Indo-Persian Relations*, 48–49; Awrangābādī, *The Ma’āsir al-umarā’*, ed. ‘Abd al-Raḥīm and Ashraf ‘Alī, 2:542–53; and Awrangābādī, *The Maāthir-ul-umarā*, trans. Beveridge and Prashad, 2:756–58.
- ⁸ Iskandar Bēg, *Tārīkh-i ‘ālam-ārā-yi ‘Abbāsī*, 1:136, 1:154; and Islam, *Indo-Persian Relations*, 49, 57–59; Sulṭān Ḥusayn b. Bahram Mīrzā, the nephew of Shāh Ṭahmāsp I, exercised rule over Qandahar with the aid of his tutor (*lāla*) Ḥamza Bēg Zū al-Qadr; see Mīrzā ‘Alī Naqī Naṣīrī, *Titles and Emoluments in Safavid Iran: A Third Manual of Safavid Administration*, trans. Willem M. Floor (Washington, DC: Mage, 2008), 256–57.
- ⁹ Awrangābādī, *The Ma’āsir al-umarā’*, ed. ‘Abd al-Raḥīm and Ashraf ‘Alī, 3:296–302; Awrangābādī, *The Maāthir-ul-umarā*, trans. Beveridge and Prashad, 2:350–54; and Islam, *Indo-Persian Relations*, 58–61. In the TAAA we find the date of 1000/1591–92; see Iskandar Bēg, *Tārīkh-i ‘ālam-ārā-yi ‘Abbāsī*, 1:486. However, Riazul Islam, who relied more on Mughal sources, regards this date as too early; see Islam, *Indo-Persian Relations*, 61n2. Muẓaffar Ḥusayn Mīrzā b. Sulṭān Ḥusayn Mīrzā’s governorship was plagued by instability on account of an ongoing rivalry with his younger sibling, Rustam Mīrzā. After several unsuccessful attempts to take Qandahar, Rustam defected to Mughals and was later followed Muẓaffar Ḥusayn, who surrendered control of the citadel of Qandahar to Mughal forces. For more on Rustam Mīrzā, see Awrangābādī, *The*

Ma'āsir al-umarā', ed. 'Abd al-Raḥīm and Ashraf 'Alī, 2:199–201; and Awrangābādī, *The Maāthir-ul-umarā*, trans. Beveridge and Prashad, 2:361–70.

¹⁰ See Nūr al-Dīn Muḥammad Salīm Jahāngīr, *Jahāngīr-nāma: Tūzuk-i Jahāngīrī*, ed. Muḥammad Hāshim (Tehran: Bunyād-i Farhang-i Īrān, 1359 H.sh./1980), 30, 41, 45; for the English translation, see Nūr al-Dīn Muḥammad Salīm Jahāngīr, *The Jahangirnama: Memoirs of Jahangir, Emperor of India*, ed. and trans. Wheeler M. Thackston (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 58, 64, 66. For further details see Awrangābādī, *The Ma'āsir al-umarā'*, ed. 'Abd al-Raḥīm and Ashraf 'Alī, 2:642–45; and Awrangābādī, *The Maāthir-ul-umarā*, trans. Beveridge and Prashad, 2:740–43.

¹¹ Awrangābādī, *The Ma'āsir al-umarā'*, ed. 'Abd al-Raḥīm and Ashraf 'Alī, 1:481–82; Awrangābādī, *The Maāthir-ul-umarā*, trans. Beveridge and Prashad, 2:921–22; Jahāngīr, *Jahāngīr-nāma*, ed. Muḥammad Hāshim, 45, 51, 65; and Jahāngīr, *The Jahangirnama*, trans. Thackston, 61, 78, 98. In his memoirs, Jahāngīr notes that Sardār Khān replaced Shāh Bēg Khān as governor of Qandahar in 1015/1606 but also states that Shāh Bēg Khān was the governor of Qandahar as late as 1016/1608. It may be that Sardār Khān and Shāh Bēg Khān served as dual governors of the province, with Shāh Bēg Khān responsible for protecting the roads eastward to Kabul and Sardār Khān responsible for protecting the roads southward towards Sind. In any case, it is clear from Jahāngīr's memoirs that while Shāh Bēg Khān was based in Kabul, he also exercised great influence over the affairs of Qandahar as one of the more powerful *amīrs* of the Mughal polity during the reigns of Akbar and Jahāngīr.

¹² Jahāngīr, *Jahāngīr-nāma*, ed. Muḥammad Hāshim, 76, 87, 127–28; Jahāngīr, *The Jahangirnama*, trans. Thackston, 89, 98, 111, 136–37; Awrangābādī, *The Ma'āsir al-umarā'*, ed. 'Abd al-Raḥīm and Ashraf 'Alī, 3:345–48; and Awrangābādī, *The Maāthir-ul-umarā*, trans. Beveridge and Prashad, 1:582–83.

¹³ Jahāngīr, *Jahāngīr-nāma*, ed. Muḥammad Hāshim, 128, 367, 392–93; Jahāngīr, *The Jahangirnama*, trans. Thackston, 136–37, 355; Awrangābādī, *The Ma'āsir al-umarā'*, ed. 'Abd al-Raḥīm and Ashraf 'Alī, 1:400–1; and Awrangābādī, *The Maāthir-ul-umarā*, trans. Beveridge and Prashad, 1:351.

¹⁴ Jahāngīr, *Jahāngīr-nāma*, ed. Muḥammad Hāshim, 367–68, 379, 393–94, 401; and Jahāngīr, *The Jahangirnama*, trans. Thackston, 355, 366. According to the *Shāh Jahān-nāma* of 'Ināyat Khān, 'Abd al-'Azīz Khān was present in Qandahar when it was surrendered to the forces of Shāh 'Abbās I in 1031/1622; see 'Ināyat Khān, *The Shah Jahan Nama*, 436; also see Islam, *Indo-Persian Relations*, 82n8, 84.

¹⁵ Iskandar Bēg, *Tārīkh-i 'ālam-ārā-yi 'Abbāsī*, 3:1041; Awrangābādī, *The Ma'āsir al-umarā'*, ed. 'Abd al-Raḥīm and Ashraf 'Alī, 2:795–96; Awrangābādī, *The Maāthir-ul-umarā*, trans. Beveridge and Prashad, 1:186; and Naṣīrī, *Titles and Emoluments in Safavid Iran*, 257. There is some disagreement over the exact year of Ganj 'Alī Khān's death and 'Alī Mardān Khān's appointment. Like Iskandar Bēg, Ḥusaynī-Astarābādī gives the year of 1034; see Ḥusayn ibn Murtaẓā Ḥusaynī Astarābādī, *Tārīkh-i sulṭānī: Az Shaykh Ṣaḥī tā Shāh Ṣaḥī*, ed. Iḥsān Ishrāqī (Tehran: 'Ilmī, 1364 H.sh./1985), 232. But there is great discrepancy in the contemporary historiography. Aḥmad 'Alī Khān, for instance states his death occurred

in the summer of 1033/1624; see Aḥmad ‘Alī Khān Wazīrī Kirmānī, *Tārīkh-i Kirmān*, ed. Muḥammad Ibrāhīm Bāstānī Pārīzī (Tehran: Bahman, 1340 H.sh./1961), 283–84. Soroush gives the date of 1624; see *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. “‘Alī Mardān Khān” (by Mehrnoush Soroush); Bastani Parizi gives 1034/1625; *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. “Ganj-‘Alī Khān” (by Mohammad-Ebrahim Bastani Parizi); and Naṣīrī (citation above) gives 1034/1626.

¹⁶ Awrangābādī, *The Ma’āsir al-umarā’*, ed. ‘Abd al-Raḥīm and Ashraf ‘Alī, 2:795–807; Awrangābādī, *The Maāthir-ul-umarā’*, trans. Beveridge and Prashad, 1:186–94; and Islam, *Indo-Persian Relations*, 102–5.

¹⁷ ‘Ināyat Khān, *The Shah Jahan Nama*, 221–33, 253; Awrangābādī, *The Ma’āsir al-umarā’*, ed. ‘Abd al-Raḥīm and Ashraf ‘Alī, 2:429–37; and Awrangābādī, *The Maāthir-ul-umarā’*, trans. Beveridge and Prashad, 2:674–78. While Sa‘īd Khān was the governor of Kabul, like his predecessor Shāh Bēg Khān he wielded great influence over the affairs of Qandahar as well.

¹⁸ ‘Ināyat Khān, *The Shah Jahan Nama*, 253; Awrangābādī, *The Ma’āsir al-umarā’*, ed. ‘Abd al-Raḥīm and Ashraf ‘Alī, 3:92–95; Awrangābādī, *The Maāthir-ul-umarā’*, trans. Beveridge and Prashad, 2:541–44; Islam, *Indo-Persian Relations*, 104; and Riazul Islam, *The Shāmlū Letters: A New Source of Iranian Diplomatic Correspondence* (Karachi: Institute of Central and West Asian Studies, 1971), 27. ‘Ināyat Khān writes that Qilīch Khān was assigned to Qandahar shortly after the conquest in Shawwāl 1047/February 1638, while Kambū suggests the official appointment took place later in Rajab 1048/November 1638; see Kambū, *‘Amal-i Ṣāliḥ*, 2:228.

¹⁹ Riazul Islam provides conflicting dates. In *Indo-Persian Relations*, he writes that Ṣafdar Khān was governor from 1049/1640 to 1052/1644; see Islam, *Indo-Persian Relations*, 103. But in *The Shāmlū Letters*, he writes that Qilīch Khān was removed and Ṣafdar Khān appointed at the end of Shawwāl 1050 (i.e., February 1641); see Islam, *The Shāmlū Letters*, 18, 24. The year of appointment appears to be Shawwāl 1050. This date is supported by Kambū, who writes that Qilīch Khān was removed as governor of Qandahar in 1050/1641 and that his replacement, Ṣafdar Khān, was in office until his death, news of which reached the Mughal court in Muḥarram 1055/March 1645. See Kambū, *‘Amal-i Ṣāliḥ*, 2:281, 2:352, 2:354.

²⁰ Kambū, *‘Amal-i Ṣāliḥ*, 2:393; ‘Ināyat Khān, *The Shah Jahan Nama*, 340. On p. 386, ‘Ināyat Khān writes that Luṭf Allāh was killed in battle in 1057/1647.

²¹ ‘Ināyat Khān, *The Shah Jahan Nama*, 412–21; Wāliḥ-Iṣfahānī, *Īrān dar zamān-i Shāh Ṣafī wa Shāh ‘Abbās-i duwwum*, 470–74. Khawāṣṣ Khān’s date of appointment is given in Kambū, *‘Amal-i Ṣāliḥ*, 2:416. He was appointed in place of Sa‘īd Khān, who likely served as the de-factor governor of Qandahar when his son Luṭf Allāh was killed in 1057/1647. Also see Awrangābādī, *The Ma’āsir al-umarā’*, ed. ‘Abd al-Raḥīm and Ashraf ‘Alī, 2:24–30; Awrangābādī, *The Maāthir-ul-umarā’*, trans. Beveridge and Prashad, 1:467–71; and Islam, *Indo-Persian Relations*, 111–12.

- ²² Walī-Qulī Shāmlū, *Qīṣaṣ al-khāqānī*, 1:429, 1:435, 1:498; Waḥīd Qazwīnī, *Tārīkh-i jahānārā-yi ‘Abbāsī*, 495, 510; Wālih-Iṣfahānī, *Īrān dar zamān-i Shāh Ṣaḥī wa Shāh ‘Abbās-i duwwum*, 476, 489; and ‘Ināyat Khān, *The Shah Jahan Nama*, 421.
- ²³ Walī-Qulī Shāmlū, *Qīṣaṣ al-khāqānī*, 1:503–4; Waḥīd Qazwīnī, *Tārīkh-i jahānārā-yi ‘Abbāsī*, 510, 527, 545; Wālih-Iṣfahānī, *Īrān dar zamān-i Shāh Ṣaḥī wa Shāh ‘Abbās-i duwwum*, 489, 518–19; Islam, *Indo-Persian Relations*, 222; and Naṣīrī, *Titles and Emoluments in Safavid Iran*, 257.
- ²⁴ Garjāsb Bēg replaced his brother Awtār Khān as governor; see Waḥīd Qazwīnī, *Tārīkh-i jahānārā-yi ‘Abbāsī*, 545; Wālih-Iṣfahānī, *Īrān dar zamān-i Shāh Ṣaḥī wa Shāh ‘Abbās-i duwwum*, 518–19; and Naṣīrī, *Titles and Emoluments in Safavid Iran*, 257.
- ²⁵ Muḥammad Yūsuf, *Ẓayl-i Tārīkh-i ‘ālam-ārā-yi ‘Abbāsī*, 246; and Matthee, *Persia in Crisis*, 71.
- ²⁶ Jean Chardin, *Voyages de chevalier Chardin, en Perse, et autres lieux de l’Orient*, ed. L. Langlès, new ed., 10 vols. (Paris, 1811), 10:30–32, 10:41, 10:100; Matthee, *Persia in Crisis*, 126, 161–62.
- ²⁷ Chardin, *Voyages de chevalier Chardin*, 2:347–50, 3:155; and Matthee, *Persia in Crisis*, 162.
- ²⁸ Mustawfī, *Zubdat al-tawārīkh*, 114. Only Ḥamza Khān’s name is given and his time in office is not specified.
- ²⁹ Muḥammad Ibrāhīm Naṣīrī, *Dastūr-i shahryārān*, 59, 107. The sequence of governors under Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn as found in *Titles and Emoluments in Safavid Iran* (p. 257) appears to be slightly off.
- ³⁰ Muḥammad Ibrāhīm Naṣīrī, *Dastūr-i shahryārān*, 119–23. On p. 191, a certain Muḥammad ‘Alī Bēg is described as the *zābiṭ* of Qandahar; this may be the Muḥammad ‘Alī Khān described earlier in the *Dastūr-i shahryārān* as the *bēglarbēg* of the province.
- ³¹ Muḥammad Ibrāhīm Naṣīrī, *Dastūr-i shahryārān*, 59, 177. Dūrmīsh Khān is described as a relation (*kh^wīsh*) of Aṣlān Khān Qūllar-āqāsī, the former governor of Qandahar.
- ³² Muḥammad Ibrāhīm Naṣīrī, *Dastūr-i shahryārān*, 59, 273. Kalb ‘Alī Khān was the younger brother of Aṣlān Khān.
- ³³ Muḥammad Ibrāhīm Naṣīrī, *Dastūr-i shahryārān*, 273. This would appear to be the same ‘Abdullāh Khān described earlier on p. 260 of the *Dastūr-i shahryārān* as the son of Aṣlān Khān. For more on ‘Abdullāh Khān, also see Lockhart, *The Fall of the Ṣafavi Dynasty*, 83; and Naṣīrī, *Titles and Emoluments in Safavid Iran*, 257.
- ³⁴ Shāh Nawāz Khān, also known as Gurgīn Khān, was appointed to the governorship of Kirman in 1110/1698–99; see Naṣīrī, *Dastūr-i shahryārān*, 273, 277. As governor of Kirman, Shāh Nawāz’s influence extended further east to Kabul province and thus encompassed Qandahar and its environs; see Mu’min Kirmānī, *Ṣaḥīfat al-irshād*, 298–300; and Matthee, *Persia in Crisis*, 233–34. Khātūnābādī writes that Shāh

Nawāz was killed in Ṣafar 1121/April–May 1709 and that Uways Sulṭān “Abdālī” (i.e., Mīr Ways Hōtakī) took control of Qandahar thereafter; see Khātūnābādī, *Waqāyī‘ al-sinīn wa al-a‘wām*, 558–59. For more on Shāh Nawāz Khān, see *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. “Gorgin Khan” (by Rudi Matthee).

³⁵ Mahdī Khān, *Jahāngushā-yi Nādirī*, 4–5; Kāmwar Khān, *Tazkirat al-salāṭīn-i Chaghatā*, 211; and Sulṭān Muḥammad, *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī*, 72–73; Bēnawā, *Hōtakī-hā*, 73.

³⁶ Mahdī Khān, *Jahāngushā-yi Nādirī*, 5; Kāmwar Khān, *Tazkirat al-salāṭīn-i Chaghatā*, 211; Sulṭān Muḥammad, *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī*, 73; Muḥammad Khalīl, *Majma‘ al-tawārīkh*, 18; Bēnawā, *Hōtakī-hā*, 76–78.

³⁷ Mahdī Khān, *Jahāngushā-yi Nādirī*, 5; Kāmwar Khān, *Tazkirat al-salāṭīn-i Chaghatā*, 224; Sulṭān Muḥammad, *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī*, 73; Muḥammad Khalīl, *Majma‘ al-tawārīkh*, 18–19; Bēnawā, *Hōtakī-hā*, 79–113.

³⁸ When Mīr Maḥmūd b. Mīr Ways departed Qandahar to invade Iran, his brother Mīr Ḥusayn was left as the de-facto ruler of province and remained in power there until the Nādirid invasion of 1150/1738; see Bēnawā, *Hōtakī-hā*, 138–48.

³⁹ Mahdī Khān, *Jahāngushā-yi Nādirī*, 346; and Muḥammad Kāẓim, *‘Ālam-ārā-yi Nādirī*, 2:550–52.

⁴⁰ Muḥammad Kāẓim, *‘Ālam-ārā-yi Nādirī*, 3:1184–85.

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